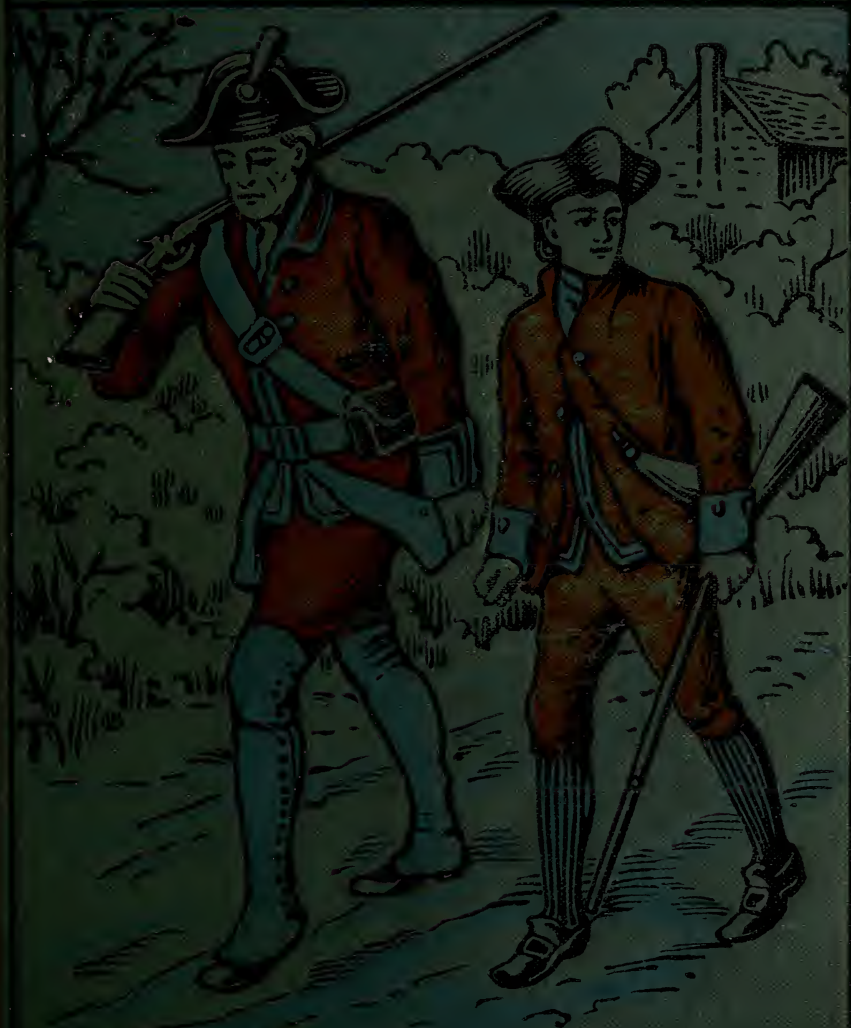


# THE BOY PATRIOT

BY EDWARD S. ELLIS



**THE  
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GENERAL WASHINGTON REFINED UP AT JACK'S SIDE, WITH THE CHEERY SALUTATION,  
"HOW DO YOU DO, MY YOUNG FRIEND?"—Page 234. *Frontis. The Boy Patriot.*

# THE BOY PATRIOT.

A STORY OF

JACK, THE YOUNG FRIEND OF WASHINGTON.

By EDWARD S. <sup>of New York</sup> ELLIS.



With Eight Page Illustrations by J. Watson Davis.

NEW YORK:  
A. L. BURT, PUBLISHER.

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# THE BOY PATRIOT.

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## CHAPTER I.

### YOUNG PATRIOT AND YOUNG TORY.

JACK MARLTON was angry "clean through" and more dissatisfied than he had ever been in his life.

You may have noticed that now and then when a day opens wrong, everything gets askew and matters grow worse with every hour. It had been that way with Jack, and, though he was naturally one of the manliest and pluckiest of fellows, I am forced to admit that his temper proved unequal to the strain, and before night came, he was in a fighting mood.

Now, as I shall have a good deal to tell you

concerning Jack Marlton, for he is the hero of this story, it is best that we should have an understanding about him, in order that the events which follow shall be clear.

I never saw Jack, for he died long before I was born, but I do remember a number of old men, who knew him well, both in youth and manhood, and all told me that he was one of the most admirable lads they ever met. He was fine-looking, sturdy, honest and truthful, and one of the most devoted patriots that ever lived. That he was full of genuine American bravery you will admit long before you finish this record of his deeds and adventures.

The most irritating day which came to Jack was late in the summer of 1776, when he lacked a few months of the age of sixteen. His home was on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River, a few miles above the city of Trenton, which at that time was only a straggling town.

His father, James Marlton, had served as a

captain in the French and Indian War, and in the famous battle in front of Quebec, in September, 1759, he was badly wounded. His left arm was taken off close to the shoulder, and of course his fighting days were over. Besides this he was troubled with a permanent lameness, due to a bullet received at Braddock's massacre. In other respects, however, his health was rugged, and you would be surprised to see how well he got on in tilling and cultivating his little farm on the Bucks County side of the Delaware. It seemed as if the deftness and skill of his former two arms were concentrated in the single one, and only for a short time did he need the help of his neighbors.

Jack was his only child, and as he grew in strength, his aid became valuable. He was a natural athlete, a fine swimmer, runner and horseman, and cheerfully gave all the help he could to his parent.

There was a wide contrast between the disposition of the father and mother. The latter

was affectionate, indulgent and full of emotion. She was a great talker, but her patriotism rang as true as her husband's, who was silent, stern, rarely smiling, and, although it cannot be doubted that he deeply loved his noble son, he rarely gave expression to the feeling. Perhaps the discipline of the army led him thus to control his feelings. The boy inherited qualities from both his parents.

When the Revolution was fairly under way Captain Marlton sent a letter to General Washington, asking the privilege of helping his country in some one of the many ways that he was sure could be found for him. Washington, who remembered him well, replied in a kindly message, complimenting him on his patriotism, but assuring him that there were enough able-bodied patriots in the colonies to win their independence, and insisting that the captain had well earned the privilege of devoting the rest of his days to the comfort of his family.

When the veteran read the letter from

Washington, he sighed, looked lovingly at the coarse blue paper on which the flowing words appeared written with a goosequill, and thrust it into his pocket without a word. He had read it aloud to his wife and boy. After a few minutes, he addressed Jack.

“How old are you?”

“I’m in my sixteenth year, father.”

“When you are eighteen, you may enlist—that is if you want to.”

Jack’s eyes sparkled. His heart quickened with joy and his handsome face glowed. “Good! good! thank you, father! But isn’t there some way,” he added with a rueful expression, “that I can hurry up and reach eighteen?”

“I don’t know of any; maybe your mother does,” replied the parent, looking solemnly at his wife, as if the problem, though a serious one, was capable of being solved by a woman’s wit. She smiled and stroked the dark locks of her boy, seated in his chair beside her, with his hand clasping one of hers.

"My dear Jack, by and by you won't be in such a hurry to have the years rush past; they go fast enough as it is. I shall be sorry to lose you, but, if your country has need of your help, and you live to reach the age of eighteen, I shall give you up without a murmur and follow you with my prayers to the end."

The father lit his pipe, crossed his legs and said no more. Sitting by the crackling logs of hickory on the broad hearth, his eyes remained fixed upon the glowing embers, while he slowly puffed the smoke from between his thin lips and gave himself up to reverie, as was his favorite custom.

It was a cool night in autumn. and by and by Jack bade his father good night and went to his room, whither his mother followed him, listening to his prayer at the bedside, and after he had bounded into his trundle bed, she "tucked him up," leaned over and kissed him, and then left him to his own communings.

"I wonder if there's any way of my soon



reaching eighteen," muttered Jack, giving expression to his whimsical fancies; "it seems to me the days weren't ever so long as now, and it will be a week before to-morrow morning. It'll take a year for the next month to pass, and Christmas won't come till after we've had several Christmases——"

He checked himself at the oddity of his own ideas, for, if he went on at that rate, he would become so befogged that he would be all at sea. He concluded to swing back upon solid ground.

"No; there isn't any way of fixing things; I must wait, and there's no use of trying to coax father to change his mind. He said I can become a soldier when I reach the age of eighteen, and he won't let me enlist one day before that time. If I pester him, he won't say a word but just take down that strap over the mantelpiece. —Queer, how well father can use that single arm of his!" added Jack in a half-scared voice, as he recalled several episodes of his boyhood;

"I'm sure he couldn't do better if he had both arms, and most fathers couldn't do as well."

"I wish I knew how long the war is going to last," he added, a moment later; "what I'm afraid of is that it'll be over before I get a chance; maybe it won't end till they have the help of a lot of young chaps like me—s'pose it should fail, just because some of us are only boys!"

Jack gasped at the thought. He did not see anything grotesque in the idea that the success of the war for independence depended upon himself and some others equally youthful, because the number of young patriots he had in mind was vague.

"There may be several hundred of us," was his generous thought, "and they must miss us. Too bad that we weren't born a few years sooner!"

With a myriad of fancies running riot in his brain, he finally gave way to drowsiness and did not open his eyes till the gray light of morning was stealing into the small room of his

modest home. Then he bounded out, hurriedly dressed himself, attended to his chores, and, as soon as breakfast was finished, asked his father's permission to run over to see his nearest neighbor, Aaron Wagstaff. The parent nodded his head, without speaking, and Jack hurried up the road in the direction of the larger farm and finer residence of old Mr. Sartos Wagstaff.

Being a near neighbor, Jack and Aaron were naturally thrown a good deal together, though I am sorry to say that the two boys had more fights than ought to have been the case. Aaron was fully a year older than Jack, taller and slimmer, and not his equal in physical dexterity. Jack was a better rider, swimmer and horseman.

The bouts at fisticuffs did not seem to lessen a certain fondness the lads felt for each other, and they occasionally spent an evening together, playing checkers, talking over matters in which they had a mutual interest, eating nuts, cakes and fruits, and drinking sweet cider. Then perhaps

a quarrel would keep them apart for a week or more, when their friendship would assume the gushing order, as if to make up for the time lost.

At the school, which they attended during the winter months, Jack Marlton led the boys in scholarship, and Aaron showed considerable jealousy over the superior brightness of his neighbor.

But Jack thought nothing of all this, as he trotted over the highway, for he was eager to tell his friend the news. Just before reaching his house, he met the youth sauntering in the direction of Captain Marlton's home.

"O Aaron, what do you think?" exclaimed Jack, dropping to a walk, and then pausing in front of him; "father says when I'm eighteen years old I can enlist."

"What of it?" growled Aaron, who seemed to be in a sulky mood that morning.

"I s'pose your father will let you enlist too; you're a year older than I, but I want you to wait so we can go together."

Aaron scowled and looked at him for a full minute in silence.

“ Say, Jack, which side do you mean to ’list on ? ”

But for the expression on the face of young Wagstaff, Jack Marlton would not have believed him in earnest.

“ That’s a fine question to ask me, Aaron Wagstaff ! I wish I was eighteen years old this morning ; for, if I was, I’d never stop running till I reached General Washington and had a musket over my shoulder.”

“ You’re a fool ! I s’pose you think General Washington can’t get along without you ; you always was the most conceited boy I ever knowed.”

“ I think Washington needs every patriot he can get ; haven’t you ever thought of enlisting ? ”

“ Yes ; father and me have talked it over, but, Jack Marlton,” added the speaker, stepping forward and shaking his finger almost

against the nose of the astounded lad ; “ I want you to understand one thing : when I *do* enlist it will be on the side of King George, and I’ll do all I can to put down the rebels like General Washington, you and the rest of ’em, that don’t know what is best for you and haven’t a spark of gratitude in your hearts. The king ought to hang all of you ! ”

Young Marlton recoiled a step, and for a moment or two was too astounded to make fitting answer to this avowal. Then his face flushed and his eyes flashed.

“ The king ought to hang me ! ” repeated the young patriot, as if he failed fully to grasp the meaning of the words.

“ Yes, hang you and all of them ! ” added the other, with a sneer, leaning over until his face almost touched that of Jack ; “ you can hear, can’t you ? you’re a traitor ! ”

“ And you’re a Tory, Aaron Wagstaff ! If you think so much of King George, why don’t you go to England and live under him ? ”

“ I am living under him ; this is his country as much as England ; I say he oughter hang every one of the rebels, and I hope to see the day when you’ll be dangling at the end of a rope, and I shall be there to laugh at you : do you hear *that* ? ”

“ Yes, I can hear without your yelling loud enough to wake the dead ; I say you’re a Tory and you’re not fit to live in America ; we’re going to gain our independence and you and the rest of your gang will beg for mercy from us.”

“ Beg for mercy from the like of you,” said Aaron, his face twisted into the worst sneer of which it was capable ; “ it’s all well for you to talk of ’listing when you’re eighteen years old, but why don’t you ’list *now* ? ”

“ I’d be mighty glad to, if father would let me, but he won’t.”

“ ’Cause he thinks by that time you’ll have a little sense in your head and won’t make a fool of yourself.”



“Why don’t *you* enlist?”

“I’m thinking about it; when you start to jine Washington’s ragamuffins I’ll set out to jine the army of King George, and won’t we make you rebels dance! The first thing we’ll do will be to hang that General Washington of yours that has been put at the head of the rebels.”

“Do you call General Washington a rebel?”

“Yes; a rebel and traitor, ten times over!”

“By gracious! I can’t stand *that*! I don’t mind what you call *me*, but when you say General Washington is a traitor, that ends all talk!”

“What are you going to do about it?”

“Sail in! Off with your coat!”

Nothing loth, the young Tory doffed his coat, and as soon he had done so, the young patriot proceeded to “sail in,” in his most vigorous fashion.

## CHAPTER II.

## DOWN THE DELAWARE.

A HALF-HOUR later Jack Marlton arrived at his home. The father scrutinized him closely as he approached the barn, where the parent was looking after the two horses, and though the boy's clothing was untorn and his face unmarked, the other saw evidence of an exciting experience, whose meaning he suspected.

"Have you seen Aaron?" he calmly asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Did you have a fight with him?"

"Yes, sir."

"I told you last week that I was tired of this fighting between you and him; go to the house and bring me the strap."

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, running to the

home, near at hand, and speedily reappearing with the instrument of punishment, which he promptly handed to his parent.

“You see, father, he called me——”

“I don’t wan’t to hear any explanation; it’s a disgrace that you can’t live within half a mile of another boy without fighting him almost every time you meet; take off your coat.”

While Jack was complying, he managed to say,

“Aaron said General Washington was a traitor——”

“*What!*” thundered the parent, suspending the partly raised strap.

“Yes, sir,—and that he ought to be hanged.”

“And you stood by and allowed him to say that! Off with your coat in a hurry!”

“But I didn’t, father! That’s what we fought about! I told him I didn’t mind what he called *me*, but when he said General Washington was a traitor I couldn’t stand it and must sail in.”

“Well, what did you do?”

"Sailed in."

"How did you make out?" continued the captain, unconsciously lowering the leather, but not fully satisfied.

"I don't look as if I suffered much," replied Jack with a grin; "do I?"

"I am not asking about what *you* suffered? What about *him*?"

"Well, father, you ought just to see him! He's got two black eyes; his nose is banged out of shape; I skinned that knuckle on his teeth——"

"Did you make him take back his words about General Washington?"

"You bet I did! When I got him down and treated him as he deserved, he yelled 'Enough!' and bawled for me to let him up. I told him I wouldn't do it till he took back his words about General Washington."

"Did he do it?"

"I had to punish him well, and he twisted about and kicked and tried to get loose, but

when he found it was no use, he gave in and said he was sorry and wouldn't ever say anything like it again. Then I let him up."

"What next?"

"He waited till he was a good way down the road, and then looked around and yelled, 'General Washington is a traitor.'"

"What did *you* do?"

"Started after him, but he dashed through the gate and was in the house before I could catch him, but I'll settle with him the next time we meet."

"You won't forget it?"

"No, sir!"

"Here; take the strap back to the house and split some wood for your mother."

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, who may be excused for chuckling softly to himself, as he made his way into the house, where he came face to face with his mother.

"Why, Jack, what have you been doing that your father should punish you?"

"Nothing, mother."

"He never punishes you without good cause ;  
I am grieved——"

"But he didn't punish me, mother."

"What are you doing with that strap in your  
hand?"

"Going to hang it up where it belongs."

"But," continued the mystified parent, "I  
don't understand it at all."

"Well, you see, Aaron Wagstaff and I had  
the biggest fight of our lives——"

"How sorry I am, Jack."

"You ain't half as sorry as Aaron is. Father  
was going to punish me for fighting till I told  
him Aaron called General Washington a traitor,  
and being as I couldn't stand that, I thought it  
my duty to teach Aaron better manners."

"And did he say General Washington was  
a traitor?" asked the horrified mother.

"That's what he said."

"And you—you—taught him to be more  
careful in his speech."

"I think I did," said the son, not deeming it worth while to tell how the Tory had broken his pledge, when he was beyond reach.

"Bless your heart ! I'm proud of you," and both her arms swung round the neck of the young patriot, with such fervency that Jack found it hard work for a minute or two to keep up his regular breathing.

"I know after this," was his conclusion, "that when any one slurs General Washington it's my Christian duty to stir up things, and by gracious ! I'll do it."

Now, I am sure I have told you enough to justify me in skipping the better part of a year, and coming down to the day on which, as I said, Jack Marlton was angry clean through and more dissatisfied than he had ever been before in all his life.

That brief but decisive encounter between him and Aaron Wagstaff naturally made their relations strained. They avoided each other, and when they occasionally met, had little or



nothing to say. The Tory made no reference to General Washington, and the patriot did not feel himself justified in "sailing in" again, so long as the other held his peace.

Meanwhile news had come of the Declaration of Independence, and the hopes of the patriots were high. But by and by matters began to go wrong. The ragged Continentals were defeated by the more numerous and better equipped armies of King George, and the outlook grew gloomier as the months passed. It was known that the expedition sent to Canada the preceding year had met with woful disaster. General Montgomery, the leader, was killed in front of Quebec, Arnold was badly wounded, and everything had gone amiss.

Washington had done everything possible to strengthen New York against Howe, but, in the latter part of August, a battle was fought on Long Island, in which the Americans lost many prisoners, had a large number killed and were saved from utter overthrow only through the

generalship of Washington, which enabled him to extricate the defeated army from a most perilous situation.

This was the news that had been brought to Captain Marlton by a wounded patriot, who was permitted to walk to his home, near that of the captain, and who bore the dismal tidings which reached the ears of Jack on the last day of the summer of 1776.

It was this news which upset the young patriot and made him fighting mad. He yearned for some one to give him cause for a battle. Meeting Aaron Wagstaff on the highway, he glared at him, hoping he would say something to justify him in stern measures. But the young Tory was discreet, and, to quote one of our late members of Congress, "he remained mute, silent and dumb, and besides didn't say a word."

It was a great relief to Jack, when his father told him early in the forenoon to go to Trenton, and buy him some tobacco and tea, for, despite

the "Boston Tea Party" of nearly three years before, it was not hard to secure the luxury in most parts of the colonies by paying the high price demanded.

You must bear in mind that no bridge spanned the Delaware for a good many miles above Trenton, until after the opening of the nineteenth century. Near the town was a ferry with several others at points further upstream. Those who owned small boats used them in crossing the boundary between the two States, or when they chose, resorted to the broad flatboats employed at the ferries.

When Jack Marlton visited Trenton he always used his small sailboat, if the river was open. He could embark in it near his own home, sail down stream, if the wind was favorable, and return the same way. If there was no wind, he knew how to handle the oars. Ordinarily the row was a laborious one, but a sturdy young fellow like him did not mind that.

Glad of the order from his parent, Jack

sprang into the craft, as he shoved it from shore, and hoisted the leg-of-mutton sail. A brisk wind was blowing, and, if it did not change many degrees, would be equally useful on his return. Seating himself in the stern, where he could control the rudder and the sail, he sat back and would have been buoyantly happy but for the disturbing news about the reverses of the patriot army near New York.

"I suppose we must expect such things," he mused with a sigh ; " for father says they're a part of war, but it seems to me we're getting more than our share. How Aaron and the rest of the Tories are chuckling over this ! When I met him a while ago, he tried to look sober, but he would have hurrahed if he dared. I wish he had tried it !" muttered the young patriot, compressing his lips.

He steered his boat out into the middle of the river, so far as to have the advantage of the current, for he was in that mood that he was restless and sought relief through the activity

of his body. It was characteristic of the times that the previous year Jack had painted out the name "George III." on the stern of his boat, and replaced it with that of "General George Washington," in letters as big as there was room for. Aaron Wagstaff had named his craft "Kitty," when it was made, but as that was not expressive enough to suit him, he wiped it off, so to speak, and in letters as large as those on the stern of Jack's boat, he painted the name that had formerly been used by the young patriot.

Jack observed it for the first time, when Aaron turned across the river, just behind him, and sailed in close to the eastern or Jersey side of the stream. The Tory had evidently started for Trenton town, and there could be no doubt that he thus guided his craft in order that the young rebel might see the royal name recently given to it.

Jack gnashed his teeth. The sight, while he was gloomily brooding over the news from New York, added to his irritation.

“ That’s the most impudent thing I ever saw,” he said to himself ; “ I’ve a great notion to run into him and sink his old boat.”

In fact, Jack partly headed his craft toward the other, with the resolve to rid the Delaware of its presence, but he reflected that he would hardly be justified in the act, and he contented himself with the thought :

“ He mustn’t get in my way, for, if he does, there’ll be a row ! ”

Apparently Aaron Wagstaff had no thought of getting in his way, since none knew better than he the consequences of such a proceeding.

The speed of the boats was about the same, and, in the olden times when the boys indulged in a race now and then on the river, the question of superiority was never settled. Because of the assistance from the current, Jack gradually drew away from his neighbor, and when he ran his craft ashore near the ferry, there was a space of fully a mile between them.

The broad flatboat used for carrying passen-

gers and teams across the river, happened to be on the Pennsylvania side, there being but one craft in use, and the two sturdy men who poled it to and fro were with it. The water was low, and no persons were waiting on the Jersey shore to use the ferry. Thus it happened that when Jack landed, no one was near.

That, however, had happened before, and, drawing the prow as far up on the shingle as he could, he carried the heavy stone, to which a half dozen yards of rope were tied, the full extent up the bank and threw it down as a sure anchor. He had done this many times, and could count upon the brothers Robbins, who managed the ferry, to keep an eye on his property.

Without any misgiving, but in a gloomy frame of mind, Jack Marlton continued up the sloping bank, and entered the small town of Trenton, which was destined soon to play so important a part in the Revolutionary history of our country.

Perhaps some of my readers are familiar with the modern city which is the capital of New Jersey. If so, it may be hard for them to picture the town as it was during the war for independence, and perhaps it is not worth while for me to dwell too much upon it.

You understand of course that few landmarks remain to-day, but let me refer to several, for the ground has long been familiar to me.

The street which extends along the river bank and is now known as Front was formerly First Street. State Street of to-day runs parallel to it, and is the main avenue of the city. It contains the capitol or State House and the most elegant of the private dwellings as well as the leading business houses. Of course it was a short street a hundred years ago, when it bore the name of Second Street. The only building that I know of to-day, which was standing in the Revolution, is the First Presbyterian church, which has been remodeled since those far-away times. Further up the street, on the present



corner of State and Warren, where now stands the imposing Masonic Hall, was the brick house in which Abraham Hunt lived. I remember the building well, for it is only a few years ago that it was torn down. There was a small house on the left, where Washington met in council with his officers. It was made of stone and was razed some twenty odd years ago.

The next streets in importance are Greene and Warren, running at right angles to State Street. Previous to the Revolution, and indeed for some time afterward, they were King and Queen Streets. St. Michael's Church, on Warren Street, was there in a humbler form during the Revolution, as was the old tavern which I remember well on the other side of Warren Street, on the present site of the Catholic Cathedral. It was in that building that the mortally-wounded Rall was carried, after the Hessian surrender at Trenton.

Through the middle of the city runs the Assunpink Creek, which was spanned by a wooden

bridge, built nearly a hundred years before the Revolution. I recall some years ago, when this old bridge was taken apart to make room for the modern structure that now spans the stream. None of us will forget that the oaken timbers dug from the ground, where they had reposed for two centuries, were as sound as on the day they were laid down.

It was into this little town, containing less than two thousand inhabitants, that Jack Marlton, on the last day in the summer of 1776, made his way and strolled through the streets with which he had long been familiar. He walked slowly up Queen (Warren) Street to the little tobacco and snuff store, on the left near Abraham Hunt's home, and purchased the tobacco for his father. Then he crossed to the other side, and walked about half-way to St. Michael's Church, where he went into a grocery store and bought two pounds of tea for which he paid in English gold, receiving his change in coin, for, early as it was, and patriotic as most of the

people felt, they were not partial to Continental currency that was in circulation with a rapid "downward tendency," which, as respects valuation, soon reached the vanishing point.

## CHAPTER III.

TRENTON, 1776.

I SUPPOSE you have heard of John Fitch, the real inventor of the steamboat. He was a native of Connecticut and was a watchmaker by trade, but when the Revolution broke out he turned his attention to making guns for the American army. He was wonderfully skilful and his weapons were excellent. In 1785, he built a steamboat which ran regularly between Philadelphia and Burlington. It was proven in the courts in 1817, that Robert Fulton, who is credited with constructing the first steamboat, had access to the drawings and papers, and that Fulton's invention was precisely the same as Fitch's.

When Jack Marlton made his visit to Trenton,

after calling at the store where he bought his tea, he walked down Second Street a short way, and turning to his right, entered a shop, which jutted out slightly in advance of the dwellings alongside and consisted of a single room. There was a work-bench extending across the rear, but without any partition separating it from the front of the store. Thus the workman could pursue his labors, interrupting them only when a customer entered. In the window showing on the street were several muskets, leaning against the sides, while between them on a level with the stocks, were three or four well-made swords, bayonets and pistols,—all the firearms of course being of the flintlock pattern.

The artificer busy at his bench, with his back toward the outer door, of course was bareheaded, and wore a leathern apron, while he plied his tools with the deftness of an expert. He was in the prime of life, being slightly above thirty years of age, with a fine athletic frame, abundant dark hair, regular features and a face

covered with a short sandy beard, while his eyes were keen and bright.

As the little bell, fitted over the door so that it would tinkle when the door was shoved inward, gave out its warning, the man turned his head quickly, without moving his body and held his work suspended.

"How do you do, Mr. Fitch?" called Jack pleasantly.

"Helloa, Jack, you're just the fellow I want to see."

"What can I do for you?" asked the pleased youth.

Let me say here that Jack and Mr. Fitch were old friends. The skilled mechanic was a sportsman, and, when tired of labor (and often when not tired), he seized one of his best guns and went up the Delaware on a hunt for birds. Deer, bears and wolves were plentiful in those days in the neighboring woods, and wild ducks could be counted upon at any time.

Mr. Fitch's favorite plan was to sail up or

down the Delaware, and hunt on the Pennsylvania side. This habit brought him in contact some years before with the grim, stern Captain Marlton. Strange to say, the two formed a strong liking for each other from the first. Mr. Fitch enjoyed nothing more than a hunt on one of the keen, autumn days, and a visit to Captain Marlton's home, where he ate an evening meal and often stayed over night.

Naturally the gentleman took a fancy to Jack, who often accompanied him on his hunts. Rarely or never did the boy make a visit to Trenton, without calling on his old friend, who was always glad to see him.

When, therefore, the man said in his heartiest manner that Jack was just the one he wished to see, the youth attached no meaning to it except that it was his way of welcoming him.

"I have asked the opinion of several of my friends," he replied, "on a little piece of work and I want to hear yours."

"All right ; let me see it."

From one end of the work-bench the gun-maker picked up a weapon and handing it to the boy said :

“There! I should like to know what you think of *that*.”

It was an old-fashioned rifle, considerably lighter than the clumsy weapons used by western hunters, and was made with exquisite skill. There, of course, was the claw-like hammer, gripping the piece of yellow flint, the powder-pan and the vent-hole through which the flashing grains carried the fire into the barrel and exploded the charge, the iron ramrod, running through the clasps along the under side of the barrel, until its lower end passed from sight into the polished walnut, which extended forward from the stock and was pierced for the purpose of holding it, the little receptacle in the side of the stock closed by a lid with a spring, and intended to contain the tiny squares of linen that were wrapped around the bullets to gain additional power and accuracy, while the stock



itself was beautifully ornamented with silver work.

"My gracious!" softly exclaimed the admiring Jack, after he had turned it over several times in his hand and feasted his eyes upon it, "it's the finest gun I ever saw."

"You really like it then?"

"Like it! Why, Mr. Fitch, why don't you put it in the window so as to let folks see it as they go along the street? It will make a big excitement in town and bring you all the custom you want."

"I've got all I can attend to from General Washington, but never mind about that; I want to know how you like the gun."

Jack raised the weapon to a level and pointed it toward the door. Fitch watched him closely, and saw that he did so without the slightest tremor, and apparently with the greatest ease. Then he lowered it, and again turned it over and inspected every portion.

"That must be worth twenty or thirty pounds."

"It isn't for sale, Jack, for the reason that it is already sold or rather given away."

"The chap is lucky who gets that."

"The one who gets it has it in his hand now ; it was made for you ; I told your father and mother several months ago what I was going to do ; I suppose your father made some excuse for sending you to Trenton to-day, but his real reason was that I might hand you that gun ; he knew you would be in to see me, and I told him I should have it ready ; of course the powder-horn, bullet-mold and pouch go with it."

While Mr. Fitch enjoyed the astonishment of his young friend, he had no wish to make anything like a scene. When, therefore, the time came to spring his little surprise, he completed it and left no necessity for any postscripts or addenda.

Jack Marlton was so overcome for the moment, that he felt faint and had to sit down on one of the stools, placed for the convenience of visitors. He quickly rallied and then modestly,



"THE ONE WHO GETS THAT GUN HAS IT IN HIS HANDS NOW," QUICKLY REPLIED  
MR. FITCH.—Page 38.

*The Boy Patriot.*



but with deep feeling, uttered his thanks. He told the truth when he said that for two years the dearest wish of his heart had been to own a weapon like the one that had just been presented to him. His father allowed him to use his gun at times, but it was so heavy that it was quite laborious to handle it.

“But this——”

And the delighted boy leaped to his feet and aimed it at an invisible foe.

“Your father and mother expect you to bring it back; so, suppose we put a charge in it that you may be ready for whatever happens, though it isn’t the season to look for game on your way home.”

The rifle was loaded by Jack, with the equally pleased donor looking on. The flurry being over, the thoughts of both turned to the war.

“You have heard the bad news?” was the inquiring remark of Fitch.

“You mean about the battle on Long Island?”

The man gravely nodded his head.

"Yes; Lew Bascomb was wounded and is now at home. He came over to our house early this morning and told us."

"I heard of it yesterday and have a little later news to-day."

"What is it?" eagerly asked Jack.

"Nothing of special moment; Washington managed to get the army, or what was left of it, beyond reach of Admiral Lord Howe, and has retreated up the Hudson. That of course gives New York to the redcoats."

"What will they now do?"

"I have been studying over that and believe the next move of Howe will be against Philadelphia, because it is our capital. It will be a big thing to send Congress flying for their lives."

"But Washington won't let that be done."

"Washington is the greatest and best man that ever lived, but he can't stop the redcoats unless he's got the men and guns to do it with.



He'll do all that's possible, but something tells me that we've got to lose Philadelphia. Confound it!" exclaimed Fitch, with more impatience than he had yet shown; "my position is such that I'm growing madder every day it lasts."

"How is that?" asked the surprised Jack.

"Why, when Washington wants every man he can get, here I'm working at my bench, as if the sound of an enemy's gun has never been heard in the country."

"But aren't our armies short of guns? They can't do any fighting without them and no one knows so well how to make them as you."

"That's what General Washington has told me several times, though there are plenty that can do as well as I. He says I'm helping him more by making muskets than I could in the ranks."

"Don't you believe him?"

"I believe anything he says, but that doesn't take away the meanness I feel over doing no

fighting, while so many are risking their lives. I'll stand it as long as I can, and, when I can't stand it any longer, I'll catch up my gun and off I'll go."

After some further conversation and the promise of Fitch to make his friends up the Delaware a visit, as soon as he could, Jack bade him good-by, and with his beautiful present resting on one shoulder, he strode up Second Street on his way to the riverside to return home.

It would be idle to pretend he was not proud of his handsome gift. He met several men, and a number of boys about his own age, with whom he was acquainted, and whenever any one of them made any remark about the gun, Jack took the occasion to stop and exhibit the weapon, warning the friend that it was loaded (unnecessary pains in the case of a flintlock, which shows at all times the powder in the pan), and explaining that it had not been bought by him, but was a present from Mr. Fitch.

He received many congratulations, while a



few who were not strangers showed by their looks and manner how much they admired the weapon. Possibly Jack Marlton made a more circuitous walk through the town than was necessary ; perhaps, too, he was unusually deliberate in his gait, and paused in front of some of the shop windows with pretended interest longer than was his custom ; but, if so, who shall blame him ? He finally reached the river-side and then came another of the great provocations and annoyances which were to make that day one of the most memorable in his life.

## CHAPTER IV.

“CONFOUND IT!”

JACK MARLTON strode rapidly down the river bank, with his handsome rifle resting on his shoulder, intending to shove off and make all haste homeward, for, boy-like, he was anxious to exhibit his present to his parents, that they might share in his delight, but lo ! his boat was gone.

He stopped in dismay and looked around. Not only had it vanished, but it was nowhere in sight on the broad expanse of river to the north or south. A mile away, a little craft was skimming diagonally up-stream, and careening to one side under the propulsion of the brisk wind which had veered around so that it could not have been more favorable.

A second glance told him that the boat was the "King George III.," owned by Aaron Wagstaff, who was seated at the stern, with his hand on the tiller. The keen eyes of Jack showed him that his old acquaintance was looking over his shoulder, and he fancied he saw the grin of pleasure on the Tory's face, as he observed the anger and disappointment of Jack.

The Robbins brothers were poling their big flat boat to the Jersey side and were already so near that the young patriot hailed them.

"Helloa, you fellows ! do you know what's become of my boat ?"

The elder brother replied :

"Wagstaff and Jim Wilkins took it."

'What did they do with it ?' asked the lad, not fully understanding the reply. Instead of explaining, the brothers continued poling their bulky craft until it grated against the shingle, and leaving the younger to look after it, Hugh the elder stepped out.

"Just before we took Doctor Hawkins and his gig across, Wagstaff and Jim came down to the bank and talked together for a few minutes. I wasn't nigh enough to hear all they said, but I caught enough to know that Wagstaff claimed he had bought the boat of you while you and he were in Trenton and he wanted to sell it to Jim. He couldn't have asked Jim much," added Robbins with a grin, "because he couldn't pay much, but they made some sort of bargain, and the two together pushed it from shore, slung the anchor aboard and Jim jumped in and headed up-stream. I didn't pay any more attention to them. I say, Bill," said Hugh turning to his brother, "did you notice where Jim went with the boat? He doesn't seem to be in sight."

The younger pointed up-stream.

"All I seen was that he kept close to the Jersey side and he can't be very far off."

The fellow shaded his eyes with one hand and peered up-stream, but failed to discover anything of the missing craft, which might well

be, since the bank was lined with overhanging bushes and undergrowth.

Jack Marlton did not tarry to make more inquiries, for he knew he had learned all there was to learn. He was angered that the two men should have allowed such a thing to take place under their very noses, when they ought to have known something was wrong and Wagstaff was playing a despicable trick.

Jim Wilkins was a loafer belonging to Trenton, who generally spent enough time in fishing on the Delaware to earn sufficient to keep him supplied with drink. Certain that he must have been a party to the shady transaction, Jack started up the bank at a rapid walk. His belief was that the fellow was hiding somewhere along shore, intending to wait until night, when he would probably return to town and perhaps try to sell the boat to some one else, and thus secure a liberal return for his rascality.

Jack's impatience caused him to break into a

lope, but as he sped forward, he made sure he did not overlook any spot where his property might be drawn under the bushes. Wilkins was somewhere along shore, or it might be he had turned to the westward and headed for the wooded island, which stands a short distance above Trenton nearly opposite the present site of the State lunatic asylum.

Better luck attended Jack's efforts than he expected. He was still trotting along, his bright eyes scanning every yard of the shore between him and the river, and occasionally pausing to make his scrutiny complete, when he sprang across a small brook, which meandered down from the woods on the right, and found its way into the Delaware. At the moment of making the leap, the youth fancied the undergrowth looked denser than usual close to the water. He decided to investigate.

He was moving carefully through the undergrowth, when he heard a rustling, and an instant later, caught sight of the white sail of his boat,

which had evidently just been raised. A few paces further, and he saw his own craft, with Jim Wilkins in the act of sitting down at the stern to take charge of the tiller.

“Hold on there, you thief!” called Jack.

The startled fellow turned his head like a flash, and, forgetting in his excitement to steer right, the craft swung round and thrust its nose in the mud.

“What’s the matter with you, sonny?” growled Wilkins, his fright vanishing when he saw that it was only a boy who had hailed him.

“What do you mean by running off with my boat?”

“Your boat, be blowed! I bought it of Aaron Wagstaff.”

“You knew it belonged to me——”

“He bought it of you this afternoon in Trenton.”

“That’s a lie and you know it; why are you sneaking along shore under the bank, trying to keep out of sight till night?”

“Be keerful, young man, how you talk to your betters! If you don’t like what I done, you kin settle with Aaron Wagstaff; this ere boat has been bought fair and square by me, and what’s more I’m going to keep it.”

“I don’t think you will.”

“You don’t, eh? How’re you going to hender me?”

Jack Marlton took his gun from his shoulder and leveled it at the fellow, whose sodden, bloated countenance showed his fright. He could not have failed to notice the weapon at command of the youngster, but he did not suspect the determination behind it.

“If you don’t get out of that boat and leave inside of two minutes, I’ll let daylight through you!”

“Say, hold on!” called back Wilkins, ducking his head and throwing up one elbow, as if to ward off the expected shot; “don’t shoot that infarnal gun.”

“Do as I tell you and I won’t.”



"Lower the blasted thing or p'int some other way; it might go off accidental like."

Even in his anger, Jack could not help smiling at the terror of the loafer. Since the latter was unarmed and the boy commanded the situation, he lowered the weapon.

"I've got my eye on you," he said warningly; "if you try to get away or play any of your tricks on me, that'll be the last of you, Jim Wilkins! This is a new gun that I've never fired yet, and I would as lief begin on you as on any other brute."

But Jim didn't fancy serving as the first target of the terrible weapon. The boat was still held motionless, by the clayey soil into which the prow was pushed, and by taking a single long step, he placed himself on shore.

"There! take your blasted old boat! I didn't want it any way."

"Why then did you steal it?"

"Just foolin', that's all; can't you take a joke?"

"Those kind of jokes are best answered by a rifle shot; now, off with you! Don't try to come near me," added the youth warningly, recoiling a step, as the fellow sidled up, apparently with some sinister purpose in his mind. At the same time, he partly raised his gun, and Wilkins, seeing that he was baffled, turned away, hastily scrambled up the bank and hurried in the direction of Trenton, without once glancing over his shoulder.

Jack gave him no further attention, for it was not necessary. Laying his gun in the boat, he pushed the prow clear, sprang aboard, and, grasping the tiller, headed up and across the stream. He was master of the situation, but he was full of resentment toward Aaron Wagstaff, who had played the trick on him.

Looking up the river, he saw that the other boat had almost reached its destination. The sail looked no bigger than his hand, and the craft was running close inshore, as it approached the place where it was to land. Aaron himself

was but a tiny speck thrown in relief against the white of the sail, and it was more than likely that he believed it was Jim Wilkins who was guiding the "General Washington" that was skimming over the surface after him.

"If he keeps up this sort of work," muttered Jack, "it won't be long before he'll find himself in the worst trouble of his life."

The sight of the gleaming, beautiful weapon lying on the seat in front of him did much to restore the temper of the boy, but when the flush of the first excitement was over, his mind reverted to the woful news that had been brought a short time before from Washington's army. It was a serious blow to lose the city of New York, though at that time it was a smaller town than Philadelphia, the capital of the new-born United States. What caused Jack Marlton to shudder was what had been said by his friend Mr. Fitch, who, thorough patriot that he was, did not allow his hopes to deceive him. He was convinced that Philadel-

phia would be the next chief point of attack. Not only would it be attacked, but it would be captured, for with Admiral Howe's fleet to assist the large and well-equipped army, it was absolutely impossible for the patriots to make an effectual resistance.

"When things get to going wrong, a good many people are scared ; I suppose hundreds that have been shouting for independence will give up and say it's no use to keep up the fight any longer, but," added the young patriot with a flash of his fine, hazel eyes, "I know *two* persons that will never give up : they're General George Washington and Jack Marlton !"

He smiled at the fancy of coupling his name with that of the great man, but he was in earnest in declaring to himself he would never yield, so long as the breath of life remained in him.

"When I'm eighteen, I'm going to enlist—on the very day ! I am now in my seventeenth year and on the tenth of next October, will be eighteen."

Strange that such a bright youth as Jack Marlton had not yet detected a grave error in his calculations, but it may be that his fervent hopes obscured his usually clear perception.

A few minutes later, he ran his boat ashore, lowered the sail, sprang out, carried the anchor well up the bank and then walked rapidly to his home. Night had fully come and the stars were shining, but there was no moon in the sky. It was warm and still, and when he passed through the gate, he saw his father and mother seated on the porch, the former smoking his pipe and not uttering a word, while his wife kept up a continual run of small talk.

"Why, Jack," called the mother in pretended surprise, "whose gun is that you are bringing home?"

"Mine, of course," was the proud reply; "Mr. Fitch asked me to do him the favor of accepting it as a present from him, and I didn't want to hurt his feelings by refusing. Look out! it's loaded," added the son as he handed

the weapon to his father, who grimly turned it over and inspected it as well as he could in the gloom.

"That's a very handsome present," commented the captain, with a warmth he rarely showed, as he passed the rifle back to his son; "I hope it will be of some use to General Washington, when you join his army."

"I shall do my best to make it so," said the sturdy patriot, seating himself at the feet of his parents on the porch. "I haven't long to wait now,—only a little more than a month."

"A little more than a month," repeated his father, removing his pipe and looking curiously at him; "how do you make that out?"

"This is the last day of August and my birthday comes on the 10th of October."

"How old will you be on your next birthday?"

"Eighteen."

"No," interposed the mother gently; "you were born October 10, 1759, on your next

birthday, you will complete, if you live, seventeen years of existence."

"Why, I was thinking I would be eighteen years old——"

"You will enter your eighteenth year, but you will not be eighteen years old until October 10, 1777."

"Is that so, father?" asked the dismayed Jack.

"Of course ; you ought to know without asking me."

The young patriot's heart became as lead. What cared he now for the beautiful rifle that had been presented him? Ever since his father promised him liberty to enlist upon reaching the age of eighteen years, he had been figuring that the happy day would come in the approaching autumn, and behold he was a year off in his calculations. When Jack Marlton first stepped upon the porch he was as hungry as a wolf. Now all his appetite was gone. He asked whether any chores were awaiting him, but his

father merely grunted "No," and continued silently smoking. After a while the son bade him good night, and, rifle in hand, went to his trundle bed, where his mother as usual listened to his prayers and "tucked" him up.

Jack waited until she passed out of the room, when, looking to the corner of where he had leaned his new gun, but which he could not see in the gloom, he gave one vigorous kick that sent the quilt and sheet flying against the opposite wall, and then feeling mad "clean through" he concentrated all his rage and disgust into the one fierce exclamation—

*"Confound it!"*



## CHAPTER V.

## THE DAYS THAT TRIED MEN'S SOULS.

MATTERS grew worse and worse. Washington, favored by Providence, the elements and his own superb generalship, had extricated his army from its peril, after the disastrous defeat on Long Island, in the latter part of August, 1776, and retreated up the Hudson. While most of his men displayed fine bravery, there was a woful lack of discipline. Nathan Hale, the martyr spy, after passing through innumerable perils and gathering valuable information for the commander-in-chief, had been betrayed by a Tory relative, was made prisoner and hanged, expressing his regret on the scaffold that he had but one life to give to his country.

The practise among the patriots was to enlist for short terms, so that men were constantly going and few coming. In a letter to Congress written on the 2d of September, Washington used these words :

“ Our situation is truly distressing. The check our detachment sustained on the 27th ultimo has dispirited too great a proportion of our troops and filled their minds with apprehension and despair. The militia, instead of calling forth their utmost efforts, to a brave and manly opposition in order to repair our losses, are dismayed, intractable and impatient to return. Great numbers of them have gone off ; in some instances, almost by whole regiments, by half ones, and by companies, at a time. This circumstance of itself, independent of others, when confronted by a well-appointed enemy, superior in number to our whole collected force, would be sufficiently disagreeable ; but when their example has infected another part of the army—when their want of dis-

cipline, and refusal of almost every kind of restraint and government have produced a like conduct, but too common, and an entire disregard of that order and subordination necessary to the well-doing of the army, and which has been inculcated before as well as the nature of our military establishment would admit of—our condition becomes still more alarming ; and with the deepest concern, I am obliged to confess my want of confidence in the generality of the troops.”

A few days after this gloomy letter was written, the British fleet entered New York harbor and an armed vessel sailed up the East River. It did not bombard the city, however, but evidently intended to approach by the land side. General Greene, next in ability to Washington, favored destroying the city, so as to prevent its serving as winter quarters for the enemy. One argument of Greene was that two-thirds of the people in New York were Tories. It was finally decided to post troops so as to

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Harlem Heights should be evacuated, and all the forces withdrawn, excepting three thousand troops that remained to defend Fort Washington.

This being done, Howe cautiously advanced, feeling every rod of the way, and on the 28th of October, made his attack. The Americans offered a brave resistance, but were compelled to fall back. This placed Fort Washington in great danger, but it was decided to hold it. A furious assault was made on the 16th of November, when Colonel Robert Magaw of Philadelphia, the commander, surrendered.

Washington was convinced long before this that the enemy meant to push a campaign against Philadelphia. He, therefore, crossed the Hudson into New Jersey and posted himself with General Greene at Fort Lee. Shortly after, Lord Cornwallis with six thousand troops landed on the Jersey side at a point almost opposite Yonkers. It was impossible to hold Fort Lee against so strong a force, and it was abandoned,

General Greene withdrawing to the other side of the Hackensack, between that stream and the Passaic.

With a view of protecting Philadelphia, Washington now began retreating southward through New Jersey, with Cornwallis almost upon his heels. His advance was frequently within sight of the American rear-guard, and the two bodies continually fired at each other. At the then small town of Newark, the patriots were passing out of one end as the British came in the other, and thus the retreat and pursuit was kept up with Washington steadily falling back toward Trenton, on the road to the capital of the country.

Those were the days that tried men's souls. It seemed as if every house passed by the Americans on that woful march had a piece of red flannel tacked at the side of the front door as a sign that they looked to the enemy for protection. Winter had come, and few of the patriots had stockings, many only bits of leather

for shoes, while hundreds were barefooted. Winter had set in unusually early and the weather was extremely cold. The roads were frozen, and snow lay in the fields and was sprinkled along the highways. The well-equipped British army, following hard after the patriots, saw red splotches on the stiff mud and snow and knew what they meant. They were blood left by the barefooted patriots, who were still ready to fight.

That is to say, most of them were, but it looked for a time as if the ragged army would crumble to pieces and pass out of existence. When night came, it was found that there were scores less than at the start in the morning. During the night, scores of other shadowy figures slipped past the sentinels into the gloom and started on their wearisome tramp homeward.

“What’s the use of fighting, when there’s not the first glimmer of hope?” was the question they asked themselves and then answered by deserting.



Thus it went until the dissolving army entered the town of Trenton early in December, 1776, with only about five thousand wretchedly equipped soldiers, all hungry and in rags, but sternly loyal to the peerless patriot who was still their leader. Straggling through the gaping town, they made their way to the riverside, and, taking possession of all the boats for a long way up and down stream, crossed to the Pennsylvania shore, the last man landing just as the advance of the twenty-seven thousand soldiers of Cornwallis entered the upper end of Trenton, all exultant and confident that in a short time the only formidable American army in existence would be destroyed or made prisoners. Cornwallis was the best officer in the British service, and calmly viewing the situation, who could see a spark of hope for Washington and his ragamuffins?

Congress had fled from Philadelphia. Hundreds and even thousands of the staunchest patriots from the beginning, now gave up hope

and accepted the offers of protection made by Howe and the leading British generals. Among these, it was believed for just a hundred years, was Joseph Reed, the adjutant-general of the Continental army. Then the pleasing discovery was made that the officer who had thus sought protection was a Colonel Read of the Burlington militia.

When the patriots forced their way across the Delaware, there was considerable ice in the river, but not enough to cause trouble. Had the enemy possessed boats they would have followed Washington, but there was no haste in the matter. Philadelphia was already as good as captured, and the rebels were too insignificant to receive serious attention.

You have heard of the Hessians who were so intensely hated by our patriot forefathers. They were natives of Hesse-Cassel in Germany. The population of England at that time was less than seven million people, but she was rich, and having a number of wars on her hands, she

hired several thousand soldiers from Hesse-Cassel to help do her fighting in America. It was a simple business matter in which there was no sentiment, and since such was the case, the patriots held these foreigners in detestation.

Cornwallis remained in Princeton, while the force occupying Trenton, composed almost wholly of Hessians, and numbering 1,500, was under the command of Colonel Johann G. Rall (sometimes wrongly spelled "Rahl"). They were very glad to halt in the town, where all could secure comfortable quarters, and the officers could have plenty of whisky and enjoy themselves. They lost no time in making themselves at home.

I have spoken of Abraham Hunt, the principal merchant in Trenton during the Revolution, who lived, on the site of the present handsome Masonic Hall, at the corner of Warren and State Streets. Colonel Rall was made welcome by Mr. Hunt and became a favored visitor there. Merchant Hunt in his heart wished

Washington and the patriots well, but he was discreet and did not allow his patriotism to interfere with his business interests.

What a contrast on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware! Amid the whirling snow and piercing gale that made the most warmly clad person shiver, the patriot army reared its dilapidated tents, which were not sufficient to shelter more than one-half the men, and gathering wood started their camp-fires, around which the ragged patriots huddled and half froze or ate their scant rations or tried to mend the rags that only partly covered their bodies. From the neighboring farms forage was obtained for the horses, and the poor fellows, inured to suffering, hunger and cold, did not find their situation so grievous as it would have been except for their former training and experience.

But, looking across the dark river, sweeping past with the blocks of ice grinding and churning together, they saw the lights in Trenton twinkling, like stars, low down in the sky, and

it was hard to know that the Hessians were enjoying all the comforts that the town could afford, while the defenders of their country shivered and starved so near at hand.

## CHAPTER VI.

## AN IMPORTANT ENGAGEMENT.

CAPTAIN JAMES MARLTON, his wife and their son Jack, had just gathered about the table for their evening meal, and the grim veteran was on the point of bowing his head and saying grace, when there came a resounding knock on the front door. There were no servants in the family, and, instead of allowing the boy to answer the summons as was generally the rule, Captain Marlton himself rose, and, passing through the front room, leaving the door open behind him, so as to utilize the light of the candle, he drew back the door, and saw a large figure in military uniform standing before him, while in the gloom beyond could be traced the dim outlines of the horse that had evidently borne him thither.





"I THINK YOU WILL REMEMBER MY NAME WHEN YOU HEAR IT," SAID GENERAL WASHINGTON.—Page 73.

*The Boy Patriot.*





The light was too uncertain for the men to see each other's faces clearly, and the visitor said in an inquiring voice, probably catching a glimpse of the empty sleeve :

"If I am not mistaken this is Captain James Marlton, who lost his arm at Quebec."

"Yes, sir ; that's my name, but I do not recall you."

"I think you will remember my name when you hear it: it is General Washington."

It was a wonder that Captain Marlton did not collapse where he stood. He caught his breath, recoiled and then gasped, as if to himself :

"General Washington !—can it be ?"

It was rare that the great man indulged in anything resembling humor, but he did so in the present instance.

"Yes ; I am from Virginia ; I remember you as a brave patriot, but if you do not recall my name, perhaps it will be well to inquire of General Greene and Sullivan and some others. I am sorry you are in doubt——"

"There!" protested the veteran saluting; "say no more, General; this is the proudest moment of my life; will you come in and sit awhile?"

"I learned where you lived and rode out on purpose to pay my respects."

And doffing his military hat, and, slightly stooping, so as to permit him to enter the door, the Father of his Country followed the happy old soldier to the dining-room.

"Have you been to supper, General?"

"Yes,—that is to say I had supper last night and a mouthful this morning, but rations are so scarce with us that I did not wish to deprive the men of even a small portion, and I have not eaten anything since then. This sort of life gives me a pretty vigorous appetite."

"I am delighted and proud to have you join us, but I beg pardon," said the captain, embarrassed by his emotion at seeing the great man under his own roof, and noticing his benignant and inquiring looks at the other members

of his family; "this is my wife, Mrs. Marlton."

Washington bowed with the grace of a Crusader of the olden time, and then took the hand of the blushing woman in his own big palm and pressed it warmly.

"I assure you, my dear madam, that it is a great pleasure to me to make the acquaintance of the wife of one of the best soldiers we had in the old French and Indian War. I hope you are well, though your looks attest the truth of that without inquiry on my part."

Poor Mrs. Marlton tried to utter a suitable reply, but she stammered and made such a mess of it that, to relieve her embarrassment, the visitor turned to Jack, who had risen to his feet and was blushing deeply.

"So this is your boy Jack," remarked Washington, after the name was pronounced, as he took the dimpled hand in his own and looked smilingly down upon the youth; "I congratulate his parents upon having such a manly youth

for their son. How happy I should be, if heaven vouchsafed such a blessing to me !”

That was nearly the finish of Jack. He swallowed the lump in his throat, blinked, and looked up in those blue eyes, while the great man retained his hand and then, letting his own eyes fall to the floor, the youth said—nothing.

“Yes,—no one could wish a better son than Jack,” said the father, with more effusion than he had ever shown ; “and his one regret is that he is too young to enlist under you.”

“What is his age ?” asked the illustrious visitor, still retaining the hand of the confused lad and beaming kindly upon him.

“He was seventeen on the tenth of last October.”

“I should judge from his stature that he was older—at least eighteen.”

“I have promised that when he becomes eighteen, he shall offer himself as a recruit in your army.”

"I shall be glad to receive him; his father was a good soldier and, Jack, I like your looks."

"But, General, surely you must be hungry," said the practical housewife; "we may as well dine and talk."

The invitation must have been welcome, for the visitor was in sore need of food. At the request of Captain Marlton, Washington himself asked grace, and then, it need hardly be said, he did full justice to the fine cooking and generous hospitality of his hosts.

By this time, Jack Marlton had succeeded in regaining his self-possession and was able, when addressed, to make intelligible answers. He could not wholly free himself, however, from a feeling of awe, when he glanced at the imposing figure, the broad massive chest and the kindly but majestic countenance, and realized that he was the great General Washington, the one man upon whose shoulders rested the destiny of America. The patriot was aware of this feeling

and did what he could by assuming a lightness of manner to dissipate it, but in his later life, he often complained that his presence, much to his own discomfort, seemed frequently to act as a damper upon the buoyant spirits of young people. Few men, indeed, found it easy, when in the presence of Washington, to forget the fact even for a moment.

To the delight of the family, he ate a bountiful meal and charmed the heart of the wife by many compliments upon her cookery. The dark bread, the browned, juicy game, the mealy potatoes and the fresh milk could not have been better.

When the meal was finished and the men talked together, while the wife busied herself with her household duties, Washington revealed that an additional errand brought him to the home of the old soldier.

“ You know we have been in camp for some days down the river, nearly opposite Trenton, and you know, too, Captain, that the hopes of

our country could not be much nearer dead than they now are."

Captain Marlton sighed as he lit his pipe, first asking permission of their visitor.

"I would gladly give my life at the end of a few years so that I might have two arms for a short time."

"You need not assure me of that, but something must be done to revive the drooping spirits of our country, and," he added with more animation than he was accustomed to show; "we are going to do it! To-morrow night, we go up the river and then cross to pass down the other side and fall upon Colonel Rall and his one thousand five hundred Hessians at Trenton. The enemy, as you may know, are in cantonments from Brunswick to below Burlington. Howe is in New York; Cornwallis preparing to sail for England, thinking his work done. Ewing with the Pennsylvania militia is to cross a mile below Trenton and General Gates is to pass over at Bristol and attack Count Donop at

Bordentown. I have engaged several guides, but I have thought that perhaps your boy Jack would be willing to give us his help."

Jack's face glowed with joy at the prospect of being of some assistance to Washington and the cause of independence. The great man smiled.

"I do not think there is an acre of ground within ten miles of Mount Vernon that is not familiar to me and I thought it might be the same with your son."

"I could follow every foot of the roads blindfolded!" exclaimed Jack.

"And, if your good parents are willing, will you serve as one of my guides?" asked Washington, turning smilingly toward him.

"Nothing could suit me better; when you get across—but where will you cross the river?" asked the lad stopping abruptly and forgetting all formality in his patriotic excitement.

"About a mile above."

"That's nearly opposite the Brummagen road."



“And how far is Brummagen from the river?”

“About four miles.”

“That corresponds with what I have been told ; do you know of the Scotch road ?”

“Yes, sir ; it turns off from the Brummagen road.”

“And does it connect with the Pennington pike ?”

“It leads straight into it.”

“So I have been informed ; and, when you reach the Pennington pike, what then ?”

“Why you don’t have to follow that far before you come right into Trenton at the upper part of the town toward Princeton.”

“I am pleased to know that your information agrees with what I have received from others whom I believe to be trustworthy. And all this ground is familiar to you, my son ? Remember that we expect to travel all those roads by night, and if there is any mistake made. it may lose us the battle.”

"There won't be any mistake if you do as I tell you."

Strange as it may sound, General Washington shook with laughter. The simplicity of the boy, who in his glowing patriotism assured the commander-in-chief that he would make no mistake if he did as the lad directed, was so delicious in its way that the great man was moved to mirth, and even the father and mother (who had now joined the group) could not reprove their blushing son.

"I mean—I mean——" stammered the confused Jack.

"Just what you said; don't spoil it by any apologies. Well, Jack, if you will hold yourself in readiness to-morrow night I shall be very glad to have the benefit of your services."

"You don't forget, General, that it is Christmas," suggested the youth timidly.

"No; that is the reason I have selected that time; the Hessians and Colonel Rall will be so occupied with their festivities that they will

give little thought to an attack by those whom they hold in great contempt. I regret, but am not surprised, to hear that they are carrying things with a high hand."

"Confound them!" exclaimed Captain Marlton, smoking vigorously.

"Mr. John Fitch—do you know him?" asked Washington, looking around abruptly into the face of his host.

"He is one of our best friends—they haven't harmed *him*?"

"No; but they would have done so, had he not been too smart for them. They took all the weapons from his shop (you know he is a gunmaker), burned it down, and he fled across the river two days ago and joined us. It seems there was a small boat which we overlooked that served his needs."

"He told me he was anxious to join you," said Jack.

"He has been desirous for a long time of doing so, but I assured him he could do much

better in his trade, for he is a most excellent workman."

Captain Marlton pointed to the two rifles suspended on deer's antlers above the fireplace.

"He made the smaller one and presented it last summer to Jack."

Washington glanced up at the weapon.

"It seems to be a very fine gun ; well, Mr. Fitch is with us now, and says, with much emphasis, that he means to stay to the end, if his life is spared. But to return to my main errand in calling upon you. We shall make a start early in the evening, for our aim is to cross the river by midnight, so as to reach Trenton before daylight. Much depends upon a surprise. I need not remind you all that our plan must be kept secret from every one."

"You may depend upon that," said the captain, speaking for himself, wife and Jack.

"I am sorry to say that our greatest danger is from Tories ; they seem to be everywhere. I suppose you know of some ?"

“ Our next neighbor to the north is a Tory, both he and his son, a young man a year older than Jack.”

“ Mr. Wagstaff ; I have made inquiries about him,” replied Washington, who seemed never to neglect any precaution.

“ The father is as bitter as he can be, but he is too old to take any part except to play the spy ; it is his son Aaron who is as mean as poison. Why, General, last summer, he said to Jack’s face that you were a traitor. Luckily for Jack’s hide, he pitched into the young scamp and punished him so that he showed the effects of it for weeks.”

Jack Marlton would have given everything he expected ever to have in this world could he have known of a surety the effect these words produced upon General Washington. He did not speak, but turned his head slowly, and looked fixedly at the youth for a full minute. His face seemed immobile, but Jack fancied he detected just the shadow of a smile at

the corners of the large mouth. He seemed more than once on the point of speaking, but, if so, changed his mind and turned his glance to the face of the father.

“ I do not see how this young man can learn of our intention ; he and his father will become aware of our marching past their home ; but he cannot know our destination, but it will be well to be on our guard, and I shall not forget your warning. Are there any others in the neighborhood whom we should suspect ? ”

“ I know of none,” replied the captain, “ but there are plenty of them on the other side.”

“ I shall have little fear of them. With the aid of your son and the other guides whom we have engaged, we shall take the shortest route to Trenton. It isn't likely that any one will learn the truth until we have passed him ; then, if he undertakes to pass us, it will be easy to check him.”

“ Yes, General,” replied the captain significantly, “ unless he *cuts across lots*.”

“ Well, we shall do our best and leave the rest to heaven ; I must now bid you good night, my friends ; the countersign for to-morrow night, Jack, will be ‘ General Nathanael Greene.’ Come to camp as soon as you have finished your evening meal.”

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE EAVESDROPPER.

TWICE during the interview between Washington and the Marlton family, Jack, who was sitting near the window, thought he heard a slight rustling outside. He gave no attention to it, for the cold, wintry wind was blowing almost a gale, and the shrubbery and naked rosebushes were so close that he supposed the sound was caused by their brushing against the side of the house.

When the illustrious visitor passed to the front door, the three went with him. While the good-bys were being exchanged, the lad ran down the short walk, opened the gate and untied the bridle-rein of the waiting horse. A minute later, Washington followed him through



the gate, and as he placed one of his feet in the stirrup, he extended his hand to Jack.

“ Good-by, my son ; I count upon seeing you to-morrow night.”

“ I expect to be there,” replied the boy, “ and I am glad to do anything in the world for you.”

“ Thank you.”

As the General swung into the saddle, three members of his staff, who had been patiently waiting outside, rode briskly forward, saluted and joined him, and the four horsemen started down the highway through the gloom at an easy gallop. Jack gazed admiringly after their leader, until all passed out of sight. Then he turned to go through the gate to the porch of his home.

His father and mother had already passed inside, and the door was closed. With no thought of the faint rustling that had disturbed him, the youth glanced up the road. As he did so, he caught the dim outlines of some one standing

in the middle of the highway, motionless and apparently intently watching him.

Yielding to a sudden suspicion, Jack walked briskly toward the figure. Instantly it wheeled and started off on a run. Jack was after it like a flash, going at the top of his speed, as did the fugitive. Neither spoke, but each gave his utmost efforts to running, where a misstep would have caused a bad fall.

Jack Marlton was the swiftest runner in the neighborhood, and the race had lasted but a few minutes, when he saw he was steadily gaining. Still the other kept up his flight as if his life depended upon his escaping.

The end, however, was inevitable. Less than two hundred yards had been covered, when Jack gripped the shoulder of the fugitive.

"What do you want?" sullenly demanded the latter, coming to an abrupt halt and facing about.

"I want you, Aaron Wagstaff ; what do you mean ?"

“What do *you* mean by chasing me like this?”

“You were listening under our window, when General Washington was talking to us.”

“Was that General Washington?” asked the young Tory, with well affected surprise; “I didn’t know it.”

“It don’t do you any good to lie; you know it was he; I ask what you meant by listening under our window.”

“I haven’t been listening under your window; I was walking ’long the road, when I seen your door open and some one come out; I just stopped to look, when the first thing I knowed you made a dive for me.”

“What made you run?”

“To get away from you; I didn’t know but what you had a gun.”

“If I had I wouldn’t have had to chase you; you needn’t deny it, Aaron; you were listening.”

“I tell you I wasn’t,” persisted the Tory in an aggrieved tone; “suppose I was,” he added in a blustering voice, “what of it?”

“ Did you hear what was said ? ”

“ How could I hear what was said, when I warn’t listening ? You talk like a fool.”

Jack Marlton was puzzled. He reflected that General Washington had freely discussed his intentions for the morrow, when he meant to march up the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware, cross the river during the darkness, and, by a forced march down the Jersey side, surprise Colonel Rall and his Hessians. If Aaron Wagstaff had learned of his purpose, he would go to Trenton on the morrow, warn Colonel Rall and overthrow the whole scheme.

Jack believed the Tory knew all about it, though he could not be forced to admit anything of the kind. What should be done ? The youthful patriot hit upon a novel plan.

“ Aaron, the last time you and I had a talk it ended in the biggest fight of our lives ; I’m older and stronger than I was then ; do you want to have another fight with me ? ”

“ Why should we fight ? ” whined the other,

scared at the prospect of a bout at fisticuffs with his young master.

“ All right ; there’s only one way to prevent it, and, if we *do* fight, when I get through with you, you won’t be able to walk home.”

“ What do you want me to do ? ”

“ Give me your solemn oath that you won’t tell any living person, nor go away from your home, for—three days,” added Jack, after a moment’s reflection.

“ Why will I swear to anything of that kind ? ”

“ Because it’s the only way to save your hide.”

“ But what’s the use ? I told you I wasn’t listening and didn’t——”

“ That hasn’t anything to do with it,” impatiently interrupted Jack, with a threatening movement of his fists ; “ come ! be quick or take a hammering.”

“ Well, since it doesn’t make any difference, I s’pose I might as well.”

Jack gave the curious ceremony all the solemnity possible, by compelling the Tory to hold up his right hand and repeat after him an impressive oath that he would do as demanded and that if he violated the pledge in any way, he would expect Jack Marlton to shoot him dead.

"Now you can go," said the patriot, who stood motionless in the middle of the road, until the form of the hurrying sneak was swallowed up in the gloom in the direction of his home, from whose windows a light twinkled.

Jack returned in a thoughtful mood, and hardly waited until he was seated before he told the particulars of the incident. The mother made light of it, but the father was disturbed.

"It looks bad," he said, with a shake of his head; "I have no doubt that Aaron sneaked around the aides and overheard every word spoken by Washington; you know the General, though he does not speak loud, has a clear

voice ; he never made any effort, when he was giving commands in the army, but we often noticed we could hear him further than any one else, though he shouted at the top of his lungs. Aaron may not have caught our words, but he didn't miss anything the General said."

"What will he do?"

"He's telling his father the whole thing this very minute, and they'll hatch up some plan of getting word to Colonel Rall to-morrow."

Jack heaved a sigh of despair.

"Then it is all up and the country will be ruined."

The grim captain could not help smiling at the woe depicted on the countenance of his son.

"That doesn't follow ; I'll go down the camp the first thing to-morrow morning and tell the General ; then he will send a squad of soldiers to arrest the old man and his hopeful youth, or place a guard around the house, so that none of them can get away until it is too late to do any

mischievous. When you are a little older, my son, you will understand how easily such things are done."

Jack brightened on the instant.

"I never thought of that; I was just as sure as you that Aaron knows all about Washington's plans, but I didn't know what to do, so I tried the oath."

"It did no more harm than it did good."

"Don't you think he will feel bound to keep it?" asked the wife.

"He might, if he was a patriot, but, being a Tory, he will break it at the first chance and chuckle to think what a fool Jack was to believe he would pay the slightest attention to anything of the kind."

In good spirits, but with a certain anxiety, all retired some time later, and, as was the custom among the country people, they were astir before it was fairly light. Jack was the first one down-stairs, where he raked off the ashes from the glowing embers of wood, upon which



he heaped other sticks that speedily broke into crackling flame, and diffused a genial warmth through the room. Then he hurried to the spring not far away, and, from the pail of cold clear water, filled the kettle which was hung on the crane over the blaze. By this time, his mother descended the stairs and took charge of matters inside the house, while Jack with another pail hurried out to milk the cow (the second one being dry), and attend to the two horses. Soon after the father made his appearance, and, by the time Jack had finished his morning chores, breakfast was ready and was eaten by candle light.

Captain Marlton did not forget his duty. He went directly from his stable down the highway to the dilapidated camp of the Continental army, opposite the town of Trenton. General Washington had given the password for the night, but not for the day. So the captain was halted by the sentinel, who sent his name to the General. A few minutes later, the visitor

entered the tent of Washington, who had two callers—Generals Greene and Sullivan, both in the prime of life. The famous Quaker leader from Rhode Island was handsome and bore no slight resemblance to Washington himself. Sullivan was shorter, somewhat inclined to corpulency, with scant black, curly hair, florid smooth face, and was of impulsive temper. Neither Greene nor Sullivan had served in the French and Indian War, and Washington introduced their visitor to each, who greeted him cordially.

They were about to withdraw, but Washington asked them to remain. It took the captain but a few minutes to explain his errand. It produced a manifest effect upon all three officers, but Washington showed the least emotion. The face of Sullivan flushed, and there was an ominous glitter in the bright gray eyes of Greene, but neither spoke until after the commander-in-chief asked them for their opinion.

“Arrest the whole family,” was the prompt

suggestion of Greene ; “ it is no time for trifling, Sir.”

“ I should say arrest and shoot the father and son,” amended Sullivan, who was in a rage.

“ On what charge ? ” mildly asked Washington.

“ That of being Tories,—confound them ! They have no right to draw the breath of life in America.”

Greene’s eyes twinkled and a quick glance passed between him and Washington. It was the former who spoke :

“ That might work, General, if they were the only Tories in this part of the world, but I am grieved to say that there are more Tories than patriots, and, since equal treatment should be meted out to all, I see no reason for singling out these persons for distinction above their fellows.”

“ It is time we showed more sternness toward——”

The angered Sullivan saw the sly look pass

between Washington and Greene, and, realizing the situation, abruptly checked himself, concluding they could get on without any more counsel from him.

"The river is so full of ice," said Washington, in his grave, thoughtful voice, "that we shall have hard work in crossing, and it seems to me there is hardly a possibility of our friend the young Tory forcing his way through with his small boat. Nevertheless, due precaution must be taken. I shall not molest your neighbors, but will place the family technically under arrest. I shall have a guard stationed outside with orders not to allow any member to leave the premises, until to-morrow morning. By that time it will make little difference whether they leave or stay."

Having completed his errand, Captain Marlton had the good taste to withdraw. Had he chosen to remain, he would have been certain of courteous treatment, but with such an important movement impending, the commander-in-

chief had no time to give his thoughts or energies to anything else. Repeating his eagerness to do anything possible to aid the patriot army, the captain withdrew and hurried homeward.

He had hardly explained matters to his wife and son, when five soldiers, under a sergeant, marched briskly past the house on their way to the home of the Wagstaffs. Fearing that after all they were too late, Jack followed them at a respectful distance. He paused in the road, near the privates, when the sergeant passed up the walk and sounded the huge brass knocker. To the lad's delight, it was answered by Aaron himself, and while he was receiving the official notice from the officer, the father showed himself beside his son and took part in the angry conversation.

"They're both home," chuckled the happy Jack, turning about and making off; "they can't do any harm now."

But little did he understand the malignancy of the two Tories.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CROSSING THE DELAWARE.

CHRISTMAS DAY, 1776, was one of the severest of an usually severe winter. It broke cold and blustery without a glimpse of the sun. As the hours passed, the cold grew bitter. An arctic wind moaned through the leafless trees, and late in the afternoon, the air was filled with sleet, like billions of needle points that seemed to be shot from innumerable guns. When they struck the hands or face, they pricked as if they were so many pin points and the cold became more penetrating.

"All the better," was the thought of the patriots, "for the Hessians will not be expecting us."

The guard stationed at the house on the prem-

ises of Sartos Wagstaff did their duty and indeed a little more than their duty, as the old Tory viewed matters.

A part of the squad was placed at the front and the remainder at the rear, where they had a clear view of each door. When the situation of the sun in the sky showed that noon had come and slightly passed, the sergeant gave a resounding blow with the huge knocker. It was Aaron who appeared in answer to the summons. The sergeant made a military salute and said:

“Tell the old man we’re ready for dinner.”

Aaron was a coward and held these men with loaded muskets in awe, but this impudence roused his resentment.

“Well, what have we got to do with that?” he demanded.

“This is our usual time for dining, unless circumstances interfere,” explained the sergeant, who seemed to be of a waggish nature; “we’re sorry to inconvenience you, my gentle youth,

but we all own awful appetites ; if you keep us waiting much longer, we'll eat up every blamed thing in the house and then swallow you and your dad and mommy by way of dessert. We ain't particular, young man, and if you'll take my advice you won't keep us waiting long. A fond adieu for a few minutes," added the sergeant, waving his hand at the indignant Aaron, who closed the door and hurried out of sight.

Since there was no help for it, the family avoided the risk of rousing the hungry patriots to violence. A bountiful meal was prepared, and Aaron showed the sergeant and three of his men into the dining-room, the others remaining on guard until their turn came to feast.

No member of the Wagstaff family appeared in the dining-room while the meal was in progress. Everything had been placed on the table, and the self-invited guests were left free to help themselves. It need not be said that they did so with a vigor and heartiness that could not have been improved upon. Every man partook,



and all agreed that it was the best meal they had eaten for months. When at last they marched out of the house to resume their watch, the parents and Aaron timidly returned to the dining-room. Surveying the very scant remnants, the elder remarked :

“ We shall have to live on short allowance for a month.”

“ Let us be thankful they didn’t eat the table itself,” added Aaron, while his indignant mother uttered but a single scornful exclamation :

“ The hogs ! ”

Quite early that evening, amid the driving sleet and biting cold, the Continental army marched past in the highway. They numbered two thousand four hundred men, and were the pick of the troops, as were the officers commanding them. Among the latter were Generals Greene, Stirling, Sullivan, Stephens, Stark, Mercer and St. Clair, while Knox had charge of the artillery that rumbled over the frozen road. There was some snow on the ground, but it was

not deep, and, as one of the men expressed it, seemed to have been all blown away by the hurricane which drove across the country, and at times blinded them, as they set their teeth and pushed their way against it. It had the peculiarity of striking one in the face, no matter what course he took, for one seemed always to be marching in the teeth of the gale.

There were no lights in the house of Sartos Wagstaff, as the long string of men, rumbling artillery and officers on horseback filed past in the gloom. The Tories were afraid that some of the ragamuffins might be tempted to take a shot at them, and they peeped cautiously from the windows until the last stragglers had gone by and were swallowed up in the night.

Then the watchers heaved a sigh of relief, expecting the guard would be removed and would join the troops, but no officer of the American army could have committed an imprudence like that. Even if the Tories were unable to cross the river, they might have some

way of signaling by means of camp-fires or torches to the Hessians on the other side. It was a long march that lay before the patriots, and no unnecessary chances were taken. So the guard remained, announcing when night had fully come, that they could be relied upon to do justice to a good supper, which they did.

Washington led the army a little way up the river, the drums and fifes silent, until he reached the present site of the village of Taylorsville, which is about eight miles above the city of Trenton, but on the Pennsylvania side. If you ever ride northward from the capital of New Jersey, over the Belvidere Division of the Pennsylvania Railway, the train will halt at a station directly opposite Taylorsville, which bears the name of "Washington's Crossing." The river is spanned by a faded covered bridge and marks the place where the patriot army crossed the stream on Christmas night, 1776.

With the commander-in-chief and his officers riding silently side by side, their senses on the

alert, they noticed some things that pleased them and some that caused concern. Ordinarily, the cold and sleet would have been unwelcome, but it was not so on that eventful night, for where so much depended upon surprising the enemy, all this contributed to that end ; but the ice in the river was more formidable than it had been since Washington entered the neighborhood. While the stream was invisible in the darkness, the huge masses could be heard grinding together, and tumbling and crouching over one another with a loud splashing as they hurried past. The current flowed rapidly, and, since the stream was of varying width, there was a good deal of roughness and confusion among these miniature icebergs, some of which were large enough to weigh many tons.

It would seem that if any of the divisions that were to try the Delaware that night could get across, all could do so, but when Cadwalader marched down to the river's edge at Bristol, he looked anxiously at the vast field of surging ice

watched it a few minutes and then turned away with a shake of his head.

“Impossible,” he said to his brother officers, “not a single boat could be forced through to the other bank, nor could we drag our artillery over these piles of ice along shore.”

It should be said that the Delaware at Bristol is more than double its width at Trenton, so there was reason for General Cadwalader’s fears. In fact, down to the present time, the Delaware has never been bridged below Trenton.

Much the same thing occurred with General Ewing, when he reached the river almost opposite Trenton, near the scene of Washington’s encampment. Thus it came about that the Hessian and English detachments at Bordentown, Burlington and Mount Holly were not disturbed.

Well aware of the great task before him, Washington had under his command several hundred Marblehead boatmen,—the same that had handled the boats when the army was

extricated with so much skill from its perilous situation on Long Island, after the disastrous defeat in the previous August. These men could be counted upon to do everything within the limits of human possibility with the boats, but there are a good many things that are beyond those limits.

In preparation for this important movement, a large number of flatboats had been gathered on the Pennsylvania shore, where they were under charge of a guard awaiting the coming of the army. They were broad structures made of thick planks, very strong and capable of floating almost as much as could be crowded into them. The propelling power was the long poles, some of them fifteen or twenty feet in length, and capable of reaching bottom in the deepest part of the river. The channel of the Delaware at that point is quite narrow, and there would not have been the least difficulty in ferrying the men, artillery and stores across, except for the ice.

Under the cheery directions of General Knox, the cannon were run on board of the boats, by the light of the big fires that had been kindled on the bank. As soon as a boat was sufficiently loaded, the Marblehead men shoved off and began their battle with the furious river. A few minutes later, another started and then a third and a fourth, one of which contained soldiers alone.

The storm increased. The gale was so violent that it carried the sleet and snow almost horizontally against the men, many of whom, though their countenances had been browned and toughened in all kinds of weather, had to bend their heads against what was like fine bird-shot fired into their faces. In their eagerness to shove the boats clear, some of the soldiers stepped knee-deep into the icy water, and it is a sad fact that more than one of those men were barefoot!

Whose heart does not throb with admiring gratitude at the recollection of the "Boys of

'76," that left their bloody footprints on the snow, and with gnawing hunger and their clothing in rags, won our independence for us ?

One man, in his anxiety to work a boat free, waded out to the further end, where the water reached to his waist. Tossing his musket inside the craft, he bent his shoulder against the corner of the boat, and had just moved it clear when an enormous mass of ice seemed to make a direct lunge at him and carried him off his feet. His power as a swimmer saved him from going under the surface, and, resting his bare hand for an instant on the ice, he speedily regained his feet.

Several of his comrades who saw his mishap broke into laughter, but none laughed more heartily than he. Seizing the gunwale, he vaulted over into the boat as lightly as if leaping from the ground into the saddle of his horse.

"I was caught foul that time," he remarked, catching up one of the poles, while the water,





THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STOOD ERECT WITH ARMS FOLDED, LOOKING OFF IN THE DARKNESS TOWARDS THE JERSEY SHORE.—Page 113.

*The Boy Patriot.*



dripping from his saturated garments, quickly turned into icicles about his bare feet ; “ and I reckon I’ll know better after this.”

Washington waited till most of the troops had embarked, when he stepped into one of the boats with General Knox. The latter seated himself on the gunwale, but the commander-in-chief stood erect, with arms folded, looking off in the darkness toward the Jersey shore. His horse, beside several belonging to other officers, was taken over on other boats.

Three big bonfires had been kindled on the Jersey side, as if in reply to the signals opposite, and they shed an encouraging light through the gloom. Looking across at them, myriads of slanting rays of sleet resembled so many spears as they gleamed against the yellow background. The shadowy figures of men could be observed passing back and forth in front of the blaze, many of whom paused to warm their chilled limbs and bodies.

The action of General Knox, soon after leav-

ing the shore, showed he was uneasy, for he rose to his feet, peered around in the gloom, sat down again, and almost immediately was up like a man full of misgiving. When he looked at the Marblehead fellows, as he dimly saw them fighting off the plunging masses of ice, forcing the boat between and around them, now and then vainly striving to avert a resounding collision with the enormous cakes, he could not help admiring their skill and power.

“ But for them every boat would be swamped,” he said, coming to his feet once more close to Washington.

The latter, with arms folded, his military cloak blowing off his shoulders, was still standing erect with folded arms, as if he had taken his station to watch a parade of his army. With his feet spread slightly apart, he had braced himself so well that the jarring of the cumbersome craft did not disturb him.

“ Yes.”

He nodded his head, as he made this response

to the remark of General Knox, but said no more, and the officer who knew the moods of the commander-in-chief so well, ventured nothing further. Truth to tell, Knox was in so nervous a state over the peril of the boat that he gave no thought to anything else. He had been full of the scheme of surprising the Hessians, and was among the most enthusiastic of all the officers, but nothing of that was in his mind now : he only prayed for one thing, which was that they might speedily reach the solid land of New Jersey.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE MARCH TO TRENTON.

“THANK the Lord!”

It was General Knox who uttered the fervent exclamation, as he bounded out of the bumping flatboat and landed on the icy shore. Washington turned his head and looked inquiringly at him, but did not speak. Then, when a couple of the men held the craft still, he walked its length and stepped to land with that dignity that was a part of his nature.

Naturally the work of forcing the boats through the ice-gorged river caused them to drift down-stream, so that land was made considerably lower down than the starting-point. Because of this, the camp-fires were not really opposite those on the Pennsylvania bank. Washington's boat had come ashore so near one



of these that, when he joined Knox, the glow was reflected from their clothing. The sleet was still fiercely driving through the air, and it seemed to be growing colder with every minute.

Walking to the nearest fire, Washington and Knox joined Greene, Sullivan and Stirling, the other officers being busy superintending the work. Knox did not pause more than a minute, when he hurried off to where a number of men were dragging one of the cannon out of a boat.

Knox, formerly a bookseller of Boston, was the best artillery officer of the Revolution. He did splendid service all through the war and, strange to say, several years after the death of Washington, he lost his life through the lodgment of a chicken-bone in his throat at the dinner table.

Washington's plan was to reach Trenton in the early morning, but he saw that the labor of crossing the river would delay him. It was close to midnight and all the troops had

not yet landed. When they should do so, a march of eight or nine miles was still before them.

While everything was being pushed with all possible vigor, a party of countrymen emerged from the storm and gloom and came up to the camp-fire, where the commander-in-chief was standing. They saluted with some timidity, and the leader announced that they were the men who had been engaged to act as guides to the American army in the march to Trenton. He looked at them with interest. They were sturdy, manly fellows, all warmly clothed, their ears muffled up, so that, in most cases, only their noses and eyes showed. Their trousers were tucked in the tops of their heavy boots, and nearly every one carried a heavy staff in his mittened hands.

Washington expressed his pleasure at seeing them and asked their names. Here they are, and my reader must bear in mind that there is no fiction in this statement. I give the names



of all the men who served Washington as guides on that memorable march to Trenton. I was well acquainted with many of their grandsons (one of whom was General Gershom Mott, who made a highly creditable record in the late Civil war) and their descendants are all well known to-day in Trenton.

Colonel Joseph Phillips, Captain Philip Phillips, Lieutenant Elias Phillips, all of whom belonged to Lawrence township ; Joseph Inslee, John Muirhead, John Guild, Edon Burroughs, Stephen Burroughs, Ephraim Woolsey, Henry Simonds, all of Hopewell Township ; Captain John Mott, David Lanning, Amos Scudder and William Greene of Trenton.

While Washington was listening to these names, slightly nodding his head as each was pronounced, by way of acknowledgment, his eyes wandered among the heavily clothed figures, as if disappointed over something. It should be said that the guides named, who were officers, were attached to the army itself, and were not

in the group that lined irregularly up in front of the commander-in-chief.

"You are a fine lot of men," was the comment, "and it gives me great pleasure to meet you. An important service is expected of you to-night."

"We shall do our utmost to meet your wishes," replied the spokesman, whose name I have never been able to learn, though I suspect it was John Muirhead.

"You are a goodly number," continued Washington, "but I expected to see one among you who is absent."

The men looked wonderingly around at one another, as if searching for some person whom they had forgotten, but who was not discovered.

"We think all that were engaged are here," respectfully suggested the leader.

"This was not a man, but a boy, Jack Marlton by name; perhaps some of you are acquainted with him?"

The men glanced significantly toward one another, and Muirhead replied :

“We all know him well, General, and there isn’t a finer lad in the country.”

“I am sure of that ; you will be good enough to remain near ; we shall start as soon as we can make ready.”

The commander gave his attention to the more important work in hand. He had a general knowledge of the country, and had perfected his plan before leaving Pennsylvania. As perhaps my reader knows, there is a road which follows the bank of the Delaware, it may be said almost from its source. It keeps close to the stream and is known as the “river road.” Naturally it leads into the lower end of the town, which years ago was known as “South Trenton.” Another highway goes back into the country, and by following it, one will in time strike the Pennington pike which enters Trenton at the northern end, or as it is still known, the “head of town.” Less than a mile

separates these two localities, and the plan of Washington was to divide his force, so that the two divisions should reach Trenton at the same time. There is comparatively slight difference in the length of the respective routes.

This division of the army, however, was not made at the riverside, but at the hamlet of Birmingham, still called by the countrymen, "Brummagen," which is several miles inland from the Delaware. It was dark, bitterly cold, and with the air full of driving sleet, when the two thousand four hundred Americans reached the forking of the roads at Birmingham. Not a light twinkled from a single house of the farmers, who were almost as numerous, in 1776, in that neighborhood as they are to-day. Hardly had the troops halted, when a dog from one of the dwellings near at hand began barking. No attention was paid to him, even when several others joined in the outcry; but, by and by, a light gleamed in one of the windows, and a man closely muffled came gingerly down

the short lane to learn the cause of the alarm of the canines. When he caught sight of the hundreds of shadowy figures, heard the commands of the officers, and noticed the moving to and fro, the fellow was seized with a wild panic and ran back to his house, as if a bloodhound were pursuing and nipping at his heels.

The arrangement was that General Sullivan should continue the march to Trenton by the river road. The main division included the brigades of Mercer, Stirling, Stephen and De Fermoy, under the command of Greene, and accompanied by Washington were to push further inland over the old Scotch road to the Pennington pike. Under Sullivan's command were the brigades of St. Clair, Glover and Sargeant. There was a conference of the leading officers, who had learned the precise distance to be traveled, and there seemed to be no reason why the two divisions should fail to carry out the plan of striking the town at the same hour.

Everything being fully understood, the army split in two, Sullivan, as has been stated, heading for the river road, while Washington and his brigades pushed inland over the highway leading to the Pennington pike to the northward. The guides of course also divided.

The march was of the most dismal character. There was no martial music, and the figures crouching over the snow, through the arctic sleet and driving wind, looked like so many straggling phantoms, led by phantom horsemen. Occasionally, a starlike point of light gleamed across the fields, but most of the time it was murky gloom that deepened only when the road led through a stretch of woods.

It would be idle to attempt to read the thoughts of the great man who led this comparatively small band of patriots to the important achievement that was to be made within the next few hours, but, strange as it may seem, a remark or two which he made to General Greene, his most trusted officer, showed that as

is often the case, when one knows himself to be on the edge of momentous events, he was perplexed by an affair so insignificant that one cannot fail to wonder that it had any place at all in his thoughts.

He could not understand why Jack Marlton was absent from his place among the guides. The great man understood boy nature well enough to read the delight and joy which came to the son of his old friend at the prospect of doing a favor to the commander-in-chief of the American army.

Not only was he absent from among the guides, but he had not presented himself at camp as he expected to do. He had been given the countersign by special favor, and it was understood that when he went thither, he would ask at once to be taken into Washington's presence.

What troubled the great man was the fear that some harm had befallen the youth. From some cause, he felt an unusual interest in him,

but it could not be expected that much as he liked the boy, he could continue to speculate as to the reason of his absence, for much more important matters demanded his thoughts.

Perhaps half the distance to the Pennington pike had been passed, when the sound of a galloping horse rang out at the rear of Greene's division. The next minute a courier from General Sullivan reined up beside General Washington and saluting said :

"The compliments of General Sullivan to General Washington, and he is sorry it is his duty to report that all our powder has become wet and he begs to inquire of General Washington what he shall do."

"Give the enemy the bayonet."

The words were shot from the mouth of Washington as if each were a bullet. He uttered not another syllable, and the courier, saluting again, wheeled his horse, and was off like the wind through the storm and darkness. When he overtook his immediate commander, and de-



livered the reply of the chief, Sullivan shrugged his shoulders and muttered :

“Umph! he seems to be in earnest to-night.”

A mile further, and here and there a light twinkled in from a farmhouse. Morning was approaching, and most of those people rose early, as do their descendants to-day. Some of them heard the sounds of the crouching footsteps, over the snowy road, the whinnying of the horses in reply to the calls of those in the stalls, and they came to the doors to look out upon the phantom-like army, straggling along the highway. Few or none could have suspected the real meaning of the sight.

Another half-mile, and, in the misty light, a horseman was observed riding headlong across the fields. He seemed to have been following the troops for some distance, as if to satisfy himself of their identity, when he wheeled to one side, leaped his animal over the low rail fence and was off like an arrow, with the evident

intention of placing himself in advance of the army and carrying the news to Trenton.

He was quick, but not quick enough. A sharp call to halt was made, and failing to obey it, a volley was fired. Down went horse and rider in a heap, the man turning a complete somersault.

But otherwise he was unharmed. The soldiers had aimed at the animal, who received all the bullets sent in that direction. By the time the dazed fellow could climb unsteadily to his feet, he was surrounded, among the captors being David Lanning and Amos Scudder, two of the guides.

"Do you know who he is?" asked a lieutenant. There was sufficient light to see the scared face quite plainly, and Lanning replied:

"Why, that's Bill Johnson; he lives two miles back on the road to the left."

"What sort of a fellow is he?"

"The biggest liar within eighteen and a half

miles of Trenton, the worst loafer and good-for-nothing in the whole state. Besides that, he's a Tory. It's a pity you didn't hit *him* instead of his horse, for the animal is worth something, and he ain't."

"Why, David," said the scapegrace with a reproachful look; "it ain't Christian to speak that way about a neighbor."

"Why did you try to ride around us?" asked the lieutenant.

"I was in a hurry to do an errand for my wife; besides I didn't hear you when you called to me to halt."

"How, then, do you know I called to you?"

"I don't," was the unabashed reply; "I only guessed it."

"Well, we'll take charge of you."

"You ain't agoin' to shoot me, be you?" asked the fellow, trembling with terror.

"That depends on how you behave yourself, and what the General says; tramp along and

the first trick you try, down you'll go like that horse of yours. We always fetch something when we shoot, and now that your animal is dead, we'll make sure of not missing *you*."

## CHAPTER X.

## ON GUARD.

I NEED not tell you that Jack Marlton was a hundred times more anxious to serve General Washington than the latter was to have his services. He was so full of the exploit of assisting as one of his guides on the march to Trenton, that hardly anything else entered his thoughts throughout the day. Once, when his mother referred to the weather as being too severe for him to venture out, he protested so vehemently that she made haste to declare she was not in earnest.

The father was thoughtful and much pre-occupied. He left the house several times in the course of the day, and not only walked down to the river, but went up the shore a long way. When Jack, after a hasty supper, expressed the

thought that it was time for him to be off, the parent said :

“ You were not to go to camp until night ; it is as bad to be too early as too late ; I’ll tell you when to start.”

But when night closed in, the father astonished his son by taking him alone into the front room, where there was no fire. The air and manner of the parent could not have been graver and he was kinder than usual in his words.

“ Jack,” said he, “ I shall not let you act as a guide to General Washington to-night.

“ O father ! ” and the lad broke into tears.

“ Wait till you hear me through,” the captain hastened to add ; “ you and I are as good friends to General Washington as he has in the whole world.”

“ I would die for him.”

“ I don’t doubt it, and so would I ; he engaged you as a guide, not because he needs you, for he has hired all he wants, but because he saw it

would please us both. You would be glad to serve him in any way possible ? ”

“ Surely I would.”

“ One moment ; I have found the means by which you can do him a real service and one that may help a great deal in winning the battle that will be fought in a few hours.”

Jack stared wonderingly at his parent at a loss to know what he meant.

“ The real danger that threatens General Washington’s plans is not from losing his way on the march to Trenton, but in Colonel Rall being warned, and the danger of *that* is from Sartos Wagstaff and his son Aaron.”

“ But they have no chance ; there’s a half-dozen soldiers guarding their house ; if either of them attempts to get out and run off he will be shot.”

“ That is well enough while daylight lasts, but despite the guards, one of them will find some way of doing it to-night and contrive to get word to Rall. He may not cross the river

—I don't see how he can do it when it is so full of ice—but he will manage to give the guard the slip. I hate to say it, and I wouldn't say it to any one but you, but General Washington made a mistake to-day."

"How?"

"In not arresting both of the Wagstaffs and keeping them in custody till morning. He could have done it just as well as not ; General Greene advised it, and I wanted to say the same thing, but my opinion wasn't asked."

The next question of the son was a natural one.

"If those soldiers with their guns can't keep Aaron from slipping away, how shall I be able to do it, father?"

"There's the point. I have been thinking a good deal of that. My first plan was to let you act as guide, while I watched or rather helped the guard to watch, but neither they nor I have the advantage that you have. Before the war came and when such a thing as a Tory was not



heard of, you used to spend days in playing with Aaron at his home, just as he did here. I have no doubt you know all the ins and outs of his house, which is a good deal bigger than ours, as well as he does."

"I do; I know every inch from garret to cellar."

"I was sure of that; there are places not suspected by the soldiers, where Aaron could slip out in the darkness and make off, and they never dream of it, but you would be sure to detect him. Now, if you want to do General Washington a real service, make your way down to Aaron's home and see that he does not leave it to-night."

By this time Jack was interested in the new scheme, though it cost him a pang to give up the one upon which he had set his heart.

"What will General Washington think when he finds I have backed out?"

"That you have been scared," was the blunt reply.

"I will go down and explain it to him before he marches up the river."

"No ; don't you see that what you are going to do looks as if the guard would fail of their duty ? The General might resent that, because it was by his orders they were placed there. You will have to let him believe until to-morrow that you have shirked your duty. When he learns what you have done and that it was by my order, he will praise instead of condemn you. Do as I tell you, and, instead of having to wait until you are seventeen years old before enlisting, I will allow you to do so on the first of the coming month, which is only a week distant."

The heart of Jack bounded with delight. *This* was the kind of reward he craved above everything else.

"You are right, father !" he exclaimed ; "I will do as you wish."

The parent added a few suggestions.

"Of course when you go down to Wagstaff's

you must see the sergeant and the others and explain why you are there."

"Won't they object?"

"Not a bit of it; no soldier objects when some one volunteers to help him at his work. While they watch the doors and windows, you must move about the house in the darkness, on the alert for some unsuspected opening by which Aaron will slip out: I feel in my bones that he will attempt something of the kind to-night."

While there was every reason to believe the fears of the veteran well founded, it is strange that neither he nor his son thought of a simple precaution which either could have taken, and which would have rendered all this extraordinary care unnecessary.

Hardly had the long column of soldiers marched past in the road, when Jack Marlton, warmly clad and muffled, passed out of the door of his home.

"Hadn't I better take my gun with me?" he

asked, halting for a moment and turning to his father.

“No; if there’s any shooting to do let the soldiers do it.”

Veteran as he was, Captain Marlton shuddered at the thought of one of the boys firing a shot at the other. It should be added, that nothing would have induced his son to proceed to such extremity with his former playmate. The taking of his weapon seemed only a natural precaution to him.

His mother kissed him good-by, and he hurried down the road, his heart light, not only because he knew he was doing an important service for General Washington, but because of the promise of his father that in a few days he would be permitted to offer himself as a recruit in the Continental army.

Jack broke into his loping trot, which he could maintain a long time without fatigue, and soon arrived opposite the large house and outbuildings

with which it may be said he was as familiar as the occupants themselves.

In the sleet and piercing cold, he paused for a moment and peered around in the gloom. He could see no one, nor was there a sign of a light in any of the rooms. Naturally perhaps this fact strengthened his belief that the inmates were plotting something by which to outwit the watchers.

Drawing open the gate, he started along the graveled walk, but had taken only two or three steps, when a sharp command rang out :

“Halt! Who goes there?”

“A friend.”

“Advance friend, and give the countersign.”

“I haven’t it, but I’m a friend,” replied Jack, standing motionless. A man stepped down from the porch, and with musket presented approached. It proved to be the sergeant himself. Seeing that it was a boy instead of a man who confronted him, the officer first inquired whether he had any companions. Being assured that

the youth was alone, he was ordered to tell his name and business.

Jack did so as clearly as he could. The soldier was interested. He had never heard of Jack Marlton, and had to form his own conclusion as to the truthfulness of the story told him. But he was an intelligent man and came to the belief that he had an honest lad before him who was likely to prove useful.

"They're a bad lot," remarked the sergeant, referring to the Wagstaff family; "I don't see how they can dodge out without our knowing it, but there may be danger of their doing so. We are glad, therefore, to have your help, Jack; but in order to prevent any awkward mistake, I will introduce you to the men."

He took the lad forward to where one of the guard was standing on the front porch, explained who the boy was and his business, and then passed to the rear and the sides where the others were stationed and did the same.

"He will have to keep on the move most of

the time," added the sergeant, "and you will be sure not to mistake him for any one belonging to the house. The countersign, my boy, is 'General Sullivan.' If you are mistaken in the dark and challenged, you will know what to say. That's all."

An understanding having been reached, the sergeant returned to his position at the front of the building. He had been ordered to keep guard until daylight, when the squad was to withdraw, passing down the road to the camp, where a force had been left by Washington. Since there could be no relief, therefore, through the long, bitterly cold night, it will be seen that the duty of all was anything but of a pleasant nature.

Thus it happened that within a brief time after Jack Marlton's arrival, he found himself standing among the shrubbery, on the southern side of the Wagstaffs' dwelling, with no one in sight, though he knew that armed men were stealthily groping about near at hand. He re-

flected how much better and effective it would have been, had the soldiers entered the house, and, stationing themselves there, confined the three prisoners to one room, mounting guard at the door. By such a simple course, all possibility of escape would be averted, the men themselves would be comfortable and could relieve one another at the task. But it was idle to speculate over that, since their orders prescribed a different duty and they were simply fulfilling it.

Now, nothing was plainer to Jack Marlton than that Aaron Wagstaff would make no attempt to leave his home by the front or rear door, for, to do that, insured his detection before he could take more than a single step. The old structure had windows on every side and of course all were under surveillance. What chance, therefore, was there of one of the inmates eluding the guards? Of course the storm and darkness were favorable, but by keeping close to the walls



of the house this advantage would be overcome.

Naturally Jack had been speculating with himself as to what was the most likely course of the young Tory.

“Now, if I were in *his* place,” he reflected, “I would drop from one of those windows of the second story, when I thought no one was on watch, and then wait till the coast was clear and sneak off, or I would come up out of the cellar window ; I think I would try *that*,” he added, referring to the last-named recourse.

The window he had in mind was at one end of the building, the upper part being on a level with the ground. It was placed thus to obtain light and ventilation, which was secured by the usual excavation in the ground in front. It is not probable that any one of the guard noticed this inviting avenue of flight, but Jack thought of it while coming up the road.

He knew it was the only window connected with the cellar, and therefore was the single

subterranean opening through which Aaron might be tempted to leave the house, though it was possible he would try one of the upper windows. The profound darkness and gloom of the interior left no doubt that the family were stealthily watching their chances and keeping themselves out of sight.

Jack halted beside the cellar window and stood for some minutes intently listening. From the river came the sound of splashing water, the grinding of gigantic masses of ice against one another and their grating along the shore as they swung past. The icy wind moaned through the leafless branches and howled around the corners of the old building, while the needle-like sleet pattered against the exposed window-panes and shutters. No more dismal night can be conceived.

## CHAPTER XI.

## A CLEVER TRICK.

IN the olden times many of the dwellings of the well-to-do people had wooden shutters on the outside of all the windows on the lower floors, while those above were provided with none. I have seen panes that have stood the beating of storms for sixty years without a fracture. All were thin and curved inward, but among the whole number on one side of the house not a single flaw was observable.

Now, as Jack Marlton reasoned, Aaron Wagstaff would not attempt to leave the building by one of the lower windows, since he would have to push open a pair of shutters to clear the way for him, and that was certain of detection; but he could readily raise an upper sash and drop to the ground. The distance was so slight

that he would hardly be jarred. Jack recalled that each of them had often done the same thing when chasing each other through the building.

The theory of the youth was that the young Tory would first decide for himself which side of the house was least guarded, and then quietly leap to the earth, provided he did not conclude to use the cellar window.

One thing pleased the lad ; in walking cautiously around the building, he met a guard every few minutes. They were alert to their duty, and it seemed impossible for any one to elude them. The sergeant was still at the front and finally Jack took his station at a corner of the dwelling. On his right, ten feet distant, was the cellar window, which of course was invisible in the darkness, while the whole side of the rear was on his right.

"I don't see how he can make it," muttered Jack, shivering despite his thick clothing and bending his head against the millions of icy

javelins that were hurtling through the air ; “ he would like to help Colonel Rall and——”

He started, for surely through the freezing storm he heard a sound that was different from the craunching ice on the Delaware or the howling gale around him. He could not tell its precise nature, but it suggested a dull, subdued throb. Instantly he thought of the window.

“ Some one is at work there,” he thought, stepping cautiously thither, though in the tempest there was no need of such care, but before he reached the place, he checked himself, stopped by the reflection that nothing occurring at the window could cause the sound that had disturbed him, and which was of such a nature that it was impossible for him to locate it.

He was retracing his steps, when the darkness on his left—that is, against the side of the house from which he was separated only by a step or two—took a peculiar appearance. A part of it suggested a form of something.

“ What the mischief causes *that* ? ” the puzzled

youth asked himself, as he reached out his hand to investigate.

And then the section of gloom assumed still more definite form, for a figure suddenly bounded out forward, and dashed on a dead run across the lawn, not toward the highway but the fields that stretched along the side of it. He ran rapidly and burst into momentary view so abruptly that Jack Marlton was dazed. But only for an instant, when he shouted :

“Here he goes ! Quick or he’ll get away !”

But one of the guards had detected the fugitive, and, as Jack Marlton leaped forward, the soldier darted across the path in front of him, shouting :

“Halt or I’ll fire !”

The one fleeing, ran the harder. The guard was in no mood for trifling. He stopped, brought his musket to a level, and the gloom was lit up by a flash, accompanied by a report that sounded weak and muffled in the gale.

“I dropped him !” was the gratified exclaima-

tion of the soldier, running eagerly forward and bending over the prostrate figure. The report brought the sergeant and rest of the guard to the spot. Jack was terrified at the thought of the death that had overtaken his former friend and stood back, silent and awed.

When the sergeant took hold of the arm of the fellow, he groaned, but was able to help himself upon being partly lifted to his feet. Then they started for the house walking slowly, the prisoner limping and apparently suffering great pain.

While no member of the guard felt any special pity for the wounded Tory, they were too manly to exult over his mishap. No one spoke, as the group moved haltingly across the yard to the front of the house, a man on each side of the prisoner and bearing almost his entire weight.

The sergeant himself turned the knob of the door, which swung freely inward and led the way, followed by the little group, with the

white-faced Jack Marlton at the rear. As the door was opened, a lamp was noticed, on a table at the side of the hall, with its candle burning. The closed shutters prevented any of its rays reaching the outside.

Suddenly the sergeant uttered an exclamation, and, catching up the lantern, held it in front of the prisoner's face.

Then all perceived that it was not Aaron Wagstaff whom they had captured, but his father. Moreover, the man who had been groaning and limping, now stood erect with a sardonic grin on his countenance.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I have the pleasure of informing you that the bullet fired at me may have passed quite close, but it did not touch me. I am ready to listen to your congratulations on my providential escape."

The sergeant's congratulations took the form of a sturdy oath.

"Where's your son?"

"It is impossible for me to tell you precisely,



but probably he is half way to Trenton by this time, and is certain soon to give Colonel Rall information that Washington and his rebels are on their way to surprise him."

"We have been tricked and have played the fool!" exclaimed the enraged sergeant, hurrying through the front door; "scatter every one of you and shoot him on sight."

It was a clever artifice—and it had been carried out with skill. Before the elder Wagstaff spoke, Jack Marlton saw through the whole thing. The father had dropped from one of the upper windows, intending, while seeming to flee, to allow himself to be seen and recaptured. To give realism to the trick, he had run more risk than probably he dreamed of when he drew the fire of one of the guards.

None of the men knew the direction followed by the real fugitive. The whole six scattered, taking different routes, all so enraged that they were ready to fire the instant they caught sight of the fellow, and to hail him afterwards.

But Jack Marlton knew whether he had gone, and the bitterness of his chagrin was intensified by the knowledge of the almost criminal forgetfulness that had left the way open for the Tory. His small boat had been lying on the bank, pulled up far enough to be out of the way of the masses of ice. There it had lain for several days, when nothing would have been easier than to take possession of it. Even if that were not done, one of the guards could have stationed himself near and nabbed the fellow when he came in sight.

But this simple precaution had not occurred to Captain Marlton, to his son nor to the sergeant. It was a woful oversight but the mischief had been done.

Jack's weak hope as he dashed down the river bank was that Aaron Wagstaff had not the pluck to venture upon the Delaware, when it was gorged with ice, but to his dismay as he reached the side of the stream he saw the boat gone.

“Heavens !” was the dismayed exclamation ;  
“ he is on the river ! ”

The last shadow of hope vanished when, from the stormy darkness, came back the tantalizing shout :

“ Well, Jack, you’re a bigger fool than I took you to be ; it’s a pretty rough passage but I shall make it.”

Dimly through the gloom, Jack caught the outlines of his enemy, fighting his way among the huge piles of grinding ice. In his exasperation, the young patriot would have made good use of his rifle had it been in his hands.

The sergeant himself dashed panting to his side the next moment.

“ Didn’t I hear some one call to you ? ” asked the officer.

“ Confound it, yes ! He’s taken to his boat and is on the river.”

“ Can’t we follow him ? ”

“ Yes, if you want to jump on the pieces of ice and swim half the way,” was the disgusted

answer of the youth; "sergeant, which is the bigger fool, you or I?"

"It's a toss up, but by thunder! Washington won't punish *you*, and he's likely to order us all shot for to-night's work."

Jack did not pause to hear anything more. A new resolution came to him. Turning up the bank to the highway, he started on a dead run for home. The distance was not far but it never seemed so long. He was in a fever of rage, and chagrin. He felt he ought to stop and tell his father of the frightful mishap, but he dared not take the time. Beside, he feared his parent would veto the resolution that had crystallized in his mind before he dashed from the house of the Tory.

When he caught the glimmer of the light from the dining-room of his own home, he diverged to the left and ran diagonally down the river bank to the edge of the water. The storm was raging more furiously than ever, but he paid no heed to the cutting sleet nor the

penetrating cold that at any other time would have chilled him to the bone. His frame seemed to be on fire, for he felt that the issue of the battle of Trenton rested on his shoulders. Aye, it might be that the independence of his beloved country was hanging in the balance, and all depended upon *his* success or failure.

Washington and his two thousand four hundred picked troops were several miles up the river, fighting their way through the tumbling ice to the Jersey shore. That they would get across Jack did not doubt, but suppose the Hessian commander received several hours' warning of their coming? He would be on the defensive and the battle would be a severe one, with the probability that Washington would be defeated.

If Aaron Wagstaff succeeded in forcing his way through the ice to Trenton, nothing could prevent his reaching Colonel Rall with news of his danger. The young Tory had overheard

the conversation in the home of Captain Marlton, and was therefore fully informed. Rall had already proved himself a good soldier at White Plains and Fort Washington, and could be counted upon to offer a sturdy and skilful resistance.

The reader may have suspected the nature of Jack's resolution, which was to cross the river in his boat in the hope of reaching the other side in time to head off the Tory. He longed to have his rifle with him, for it looked as if some shooting would be necessary before he saw the end of his adventure, but, as has been shown, he did not hesitate for an instant with any idea of entering his own home, the main reason being his fear that his father would forbid him to make the rash attempt.

There lay his boat, pulled up on the shore just as Aaron Wagstaff's had been, with the two oars and pole lying in the bottom. The sail had been carried to the house to protect it from the storm, but it would have been of no

use that night : everything depended on the oars and pole.

Seizing the craft by the stern, the youth applied all his strength, his body inclining almost horizontally. Never was he so strong. The hull grated over the pebbly beach and the boat slid out into the water. With a second powerful shove, he leaped in as it was swinging clear, caught up both oars and braced himself for his severe work.

The danger began with the first moment. When the paddle on his left was dipped it sank into clear water, but the one in his right hand slid over the top of a cake of ice, as if the surface were oiled. No resistance being offered, the boat described a half circle, and the next moment the obstructing mass banged against it with a shock that it seemed must have crushed in the side as if it were an egg-shell.

But the craft was staunch, and in an instant Jack regained control of it. The reader will perceive the danger and difficulty by which he

was surrounded. Had he stopped striving and floated with the current, there would have been little or no trouble, for the progress of all would have been substantially the same. The cause of the craunching and occasional collision of the masses of ice was the eddies and different currents which gave an erratic movement to them. Now and then this was so marked that a vast block would slide upon another, as if climbing the roof of a house, and bear it out of sight, or would bump against it with a violence that sent sprays of water high in air.



## CHAPTER XII.

## A DESPERATE CHASE.

Now, when it is remembered that Jack Marlton had to force his way through these surging masses of ice, it will be seen that he had undertaken a task harder for him than that of the soldiers who were fighting the current several miles further up the Delaware.

In the first place, the Marblehead boatmen were powerful and skilful, and in each of the large boats were a number with poles who could sheer off the impinging masses, and, even when their craft were struck, as was often the case, they were staunch enough to resist the shock. The fact that every man, horse and cannon were transported safely across the

Delaware is proof that the peril was not so great as has often been pictured.

With Jack Marlton, however, it was different. The strongest vessels that venture into the polar regions are always in danger of being "nipped," that is to say, crushed by the resistless mountains of ice, and many a daring navigator and his crew have been sent to the bottom of the Arctic Ocean from this cause. Should the boat of the youth happen to be caught between two of the masses, weighing many tons apiece, it would yield like pasteboard, and his situation become perilous in the extreme.

And yet there was no escaping the risk, and the knowledge that such was the fact did not hold him in check for an instant. Having swung his craft around, he bent to the oars again, and succeeded in driving it perhaps twenty feet, straight away from shore, when both paddles struck the ice, and slid so swiftly over the surface, that the failure of resistance

on the part of the blades caused him to fall over on his back.

He was up in an instant, and peered about in the gloom trying to decide the best thing to do. One peculiarity struck him,—the same that was afterward mentioned by many who took part in the eventful incidents of that night. Snow and sleet filled the air, and the wind blew a gale from nightfall till daybreak the next morning, and yet there seemed to be at times a peculiar lightness to the gloom. It would appear that the darkness ought to have been so profound and impenetrable that the proverbial phrase of one being unable to see his hand before his face should have applied.

But for a good deal of the time it was otherwise. A person could distinguish for twenty feet and sometimes further. Such it will be remembered was the case, when the young Tory called to Jack from his boat some distance out on the river, and when our young hero looked anxiously about him, he plainly discerned his

surroundings. At times, the field of vision was more extended than at others, and then again, it narrowed to a yard or two.

That which Jack Marlton detected convinced him that his oars were as useless as his sail would have been. He, therefore, unshipped and dropped them in the bottom of the boat, and catching up the pole, rose to his feet. It was all-important that he should get forward as fast as he could, and at considerable risk he jammed the iron-pointed end of the pole into the surface of a cake of ice and pushed with might and main.

The craft shot forward under the propulsion, and all went well for several minutes, when something very much resembling a catastrophe occurred. An odd commingling of the grinding masses drove the edge of one enormous piece directly under the boat, which was lifted entirely clear of the water, and the next instant was riding downward as buoyantly as if resting on the deck of a vessel.

“ This will never do ! ” exclaimed the startled Jack, as he stepped over the side of the craft upon the cake that was supporting it, and began pushing with might and main.

The task proved harder than he expected, for his feet slipped on the wet, glassy surface and he fell two or three times, without moving the boat. He stopped to think of some way of getting out of the scrape. A minute was sufficient for his Yankee ingenuity to assert itself.

Jamming the lower point of the pole into the ice, he used it as a lever and pried the boat sideways. It readily yielded, and, continuing the effort, he soon had the satisfaction of hearing it drop into clear water. Pole in hand, he stood upright within the craft and continued his sturdy battle.

Carefully, strongly, courageously and coolly, he pushed his perilous work. Now and then he raised his eyes from his immediate surroundings and peered through the tempest and darkness.

The twinkling lights in the direction of Trenton showed where the Hessians were making merry on this joyous Christmas. As yet they had no suspicion of that shadowy host that were fighting their way through the turbulent river and among the masses of ice inspired by the grim resolution to strike a blow for the independence of their country that would fire anew the drooping spirits of their countrymen.

But what a cruel fate if, when Washington and his fellow-patriots arrived in town, they should find the mercenaries prepared and eager to be attacked! The thought thrilled Jack Marlton with new determination, and, had he known that by giving up his young life such a catastrophe could be averted, he would not have hesitated for an instant. Of such stuff were the boys of the Revolution made.

Jack's battle with the ice had lasted for half an hour, and he found himself speculating as to how far he had progressed. It seemed to him he must be most of the way across, but when he

looked at the twinkling points in advance, they still appeared a long distance off. However, he began to fear that, before he could make land, he would be carried considerably below the town.

These gloomy thoughts were in his mind, and he was still striving with might and main, when he was thrilled by the sight of a person directly in his front and engaged with the same work with himself. That is to say, he was standing up in his boat, pole in hand, and doing his best to fight his way among the masses of ice to the Jersey shore.

It was Aaron Wagstaff the Tory! There could be no doubt of it. By a strange providence he had been carried down stream until he and his pursuer were within a few yards of each other. Furthermore, when Jack glanced at him he discerned the dim outlines of the shore beyond. They were nearer land than he had suspected.

Ah, if he only had his rifle with him! He

would not shoot the Tory, but he would cover him with the weapon and compel him to cease struggling and allow the boat to drift down the river or make him turn about and work his way back to the Pennsylvania shore, or he would hold him a prisoner until both landed.

But why speculate as to that, when neither of them had any kind of weapon at command?

The bad feature of the situation was that the Tory was nearer land than the patriot, and, since Jack saw him, it was reasonable that the other saw Jack. In the natural course of events, Wagstaff would make shore soon enough to gain all the start he wished. The only way to prevent it was by working more vigorously or at least more skilfully.

Jack plied the pole with might and main, but glancing at his enemy noted that he was doing the same. Plainly he realized his peril and was striving his utmost to escape it.

The young patriot's eagerness and impetuosity worked ill, for it made him reckless.



He knew he was close to land, and the moments were of measureless value. Instead of fighting off the blocks of ice, and picking his course, he pushed ahead with all the strength he could summon. Besides, the Tory was so near the shore that not a moment must be thrown away. The most desperate chances had to be taken without hesitation.

What might have been expected came speedily. There was a shock that threw Jack on his face, with the pole flying overboard beyond his reach, and then came a crushing, ripping, tearing sound and the flying of splinters about him. The boat had been caught between two immense ice cakes, under the erratic control of interfering eddies, and the craft was crushed as utterly and completely as was the supply steamer "Proteous," when on its way to the far North with supplies for the Greely party.

Only the activity of Jack Marlton saved him from death. Quick to understand his peril, he partly rose to his feet, and made a tremendous

bound from the wreck, landing on one of the bergs that had done all this mischief. He was so near the edge of his support that it instantly tipped with him, and, despite a desperate effort, he dropped into the icy water whose thrilling chill caused him to gasp for breath.

But not once did he lose his presence of mind. His heavy clothing hampered him, and despite his skill in swimming, he might have been in serious danger, but for the blocks of ice that were all around him. Grasping one of these, he was fortunate in finding it buoyant enough to allow him to climb out of the water without drawing the edge under.

Glancing in the direction of the Tory, he saw that he, too, was in trouble, for his boat had been nipped and he was obliged to leap out ; but, instead of falling into the water he landed on a cake of ice, sprang to another, and was thus making his way uncertainly to land.

If he could do that, what was to prevent Jack Marlton imitating him ? On the instant, he

made a bound from the mass on which he had first leaped, but the support was so light that it immediately sank. Before, however, it could go under, Jack had jumped to a second which was firmer, then to a third, which sank so suddenly that only by a quick leap did he save himself. Then to another and another, rushing blindly, as may be said, for, having started, he had to keep going, even if a space of clear water opened in front.

That very thing happened. He was taking long leaps, hurrying from one support to another, and accepting the chances as they came, when to his dismay, he perceived more than a dozen feet of unobstructed water across his path. He glanced up and down the river, but it looked as if some projection of land turned all the ice-masses away from the shore and no support would come to him. Possibly he might find what he needed by going up or down stream, but there was no time to do so.

For all the while, the Tory had been improv-

ing the moments. Fortune seemed to be with him, and he went from one support to another, as if each had been specially placed for his accommodation. He was not directly in front of Jack but a little way up-stream. Nevertheless, he was called upon to face the open spot, and he did so unhesitatingly. Jack heard the splash as he leaped into it, and only a few seconds behind him, the young patriot did the same. To his vast relief, the water was so shallow that it did not rise above his knees. He splashed through on a run, and with the moisture flying from his dripping garments at last stood on firm land.

The Delaware had been safely crossed, and he had emerged directly opposite the town, but his whole interest centered in Aaron Wagstaff who had the advantage of two or three minutes and was making the best possible use of the opportunity. He started on a run up the slope with the young patriot perhaps fifty feet behind, and sure to overtake him, if the chase lasted a hundred yards further.



JACK HEARD THE SPLASH AS THE YOUNG TORY LEAPED INTO THE WATER, AND QUICKLY THE YOUNG PATRIOT DID THE SAME.—Page 170.

*The Boy Patriot.*





“Stop!” commanded Jack, “before I shoot!”

It was a brave bluff, and would have worked but for an exasperating interference. Without looking around, the Tory slackened his pace, feeling that it was all up, when from a point directly in front, rang out a sharp command:

“Halt! who comes dere?”

It was a Hessian picket, who had noted the singular race, and stood with leveled musket in front of the two youths and only a short distance off.

It was an immeasurable relief to the Tory and an unspeakable aggravation to his pursuer, but there was no help for it and both abruptly halted.

The German, who could speak English quite well, demanded an explanation of the strange proceeding.

“He was running away and I was trying to catch him,” replied Jack Marlton.

“Vy does you run away?” asked the sentinel, turning to the Tory.

"I have important news for Colonel Rall ; I was hurrying to take it to him ; this rebel knew it and tried to stop me."

"I no like your looks," said the Hessian, shaking his head, and looking fixedly at Wagstaff ; "I likes the look of the oder much better ; I believes what he says ; he will tell whether what you say be true."

Jack Marlton was sorely tempted for the moment. He had but to utter a falsehood and the great service he craved to render to the Father of his Country would be rendered. The Hessian would not believe the Tory, if the patriot contradicted him.

"No," said Jack Marlton ; "he tells the truth ; he has a message for Colonel Rall ; I tried to prevent his delivering it, for I am the biggest rebel for a boy that you ever saw or ever will see."



## CHAPTER XIII.

## A PRISONER.

It was not in a spirit of braggadocio that Jack Marlton spoke these emphatic words. The utterance of a falsehood would have given him a vast advantage, as the case appeared, for the Hessian sentinel left no doubt on that point. He liked the lad and had declared he would believe what he said, even though it was contradicted by his companion.

Jack knew when he made his reply that it insured his detention as a prisoner and, woful to say, the delivery of the message of Aaron Wagstaff to Colonel Rall, with the probable overthrow of the brilliant campaign of General Washington as a sequel. The consciousness of

this fact sent the bitterest pang of his life through the heart of the youth ; but above and beyond that was the thrilling, approving voice of conscience :

“ You have spoken the truth ; leave the issue with your Maker.”

And no misery could dim the exquisite pleasure which was a part of that knowledge. He had done his duty and higher praise cannot be accorded to mortal. He was content to accept his fate.

It would be interesting could we tell the thoughts that entered the brain of the stocky, powerfully-built Hessian, who heard the youth's avowal. While that is impossible, there can be no doubt that he was favorably impressed by one who had already won his esteem. But he was a soldier, who knew only his duty. With hardly a moment's hesitation, he called the corporal of the guard, who speedily made his appearance, with a couple of other soldiers.

The brief conversation that followed was in German, of which the boys caught only one word that they understood. That was the name "Fritz," applied to the sentinel. He explained to the corporal the circumstances, and that officer in broken English gave the youths to understand they were prisoners. They were ordered to walk up the bank and into First Street, which now bears the name of Front and runs parallel to the Delaware.

It was a curious procession, with the youths in front of the corporal and two soldiers walking immediately behind them. Each of course carried a loaded musket, which he was ready to use on the instant that either sought his liberty by a sudden dash. There might have been some difficulty in firing the flint-locks, whose powder was probably wet from the tempest of driving sleet, that had been raging for hours and still raged with undiminished fury, but the youths were too prudent to take any risk. Rather should it be said that one of them was

too prudent, for the Tory had nothing to fear, since he was among friends and engaged on business in their behalf.

The clothing of both was saturated, and but for the movement of their limbs their garments would have frozen to them. They were chilled through, but the varying and intense emotions of the two prevented suffering from that cause.

Jack Marlton's senses were never keener. What first attracted his notice was that while Fritz the sentinel was perfectly sober, the corporal and both his men were plainly under the influence of liquor. It must be remembered that it was Christmas, and the Hessians were having an old-time jollification in Trenton on that historical occasion.

The corporal had fair control of himself and was able to walk steadily, but one of the soldiers lurched so much that he brought a sharp reproof from his officer, who, like many persons, when slightly under the power of intoxicants,

believed he was concealing the fact by his own supernatural sobriety.

It was but a short walk up the bank and into First Street, when the party turned to the eastward, which is in the direction of the present canal and railway station. There were dwelling-houses on either hand, though some of them were separated by considerable space. Despite the lateness of the hour and the driving storm, lights gleamed from the windows of nearly every house, and when the procession came opposite the first large structure, the sound of music was heard within. It was a curious mixture—that of a violin, a hautboy and some kind of a horn, discoursing the liveliest kind of strains for the roystering dancers.

It may be worth saying at this point that Colonel Rall was almost foolishly fond of band music. He kept the members playing for hours for his amusement and showed as much delight over the harsh rapid notes of the hautboy as a child. Old residents of Trenton, who

lived there when he and his Hessians occupied the town, used to tell of seeing the sturdy German standing perfectly enraptured with the work of his musicians, who blew until their cheeks cracked, probably inwardly cursing their commander who could never get too much of the entertainment that was an oppressive bore to those who provided it.

Walking side by side through the dismal storm, occasionally lit up by the light from the dwellings on their right or left, Jack Marlton and Aaron Wagstaff could have touched hands, had they wished, but they did nothing of the sort, and for a time neither spoke. Then, the chuckling Tory said :

“ Well, Jack, you have learned what a big fool you are, haven’t you ? ”

“ Yes,” was the grim response of the young patriot ; “ we were all a lot of fools to give you the chance to slip off as you did ; it would have been easy enough to take away your boat if we had thought, but we didn’t.”

“ I watched all day for it to go, and thought when I hurried down to the river that I wouldn’t find it there, but it was waiting.”

“ Suppose it hadn’t been there,” continued Jack, as if trying to add to his own bitterness of memory, “ what would you have done ? ”

“ Nothing ; what *could* I have done ? ”

“ And you heard all that General Washington said to us last night ? ”

“ I didn’t let a word get away ; I was going along the road, when he rode up and tied his horse in front of your gate and left the aides waiting outside ; I thought something was up, and sneaked round to the side window. I’m afraid of only one thing.”

“ What’s that ? ” eagerly asked Jack.

“ That General Washington won’t be able to get along without having you to guide his ragamuffins over the roads to Trenton.”

And the Tory chortled, while the patriot bit his lips with chagrin and rage. His enemy mean to rub it in without mercy.

"Maybe they won't let you see Colonel Rall."

"Don't you shake hands with yourself over that! I don't care if they don't; they'll take the old man's note to him. He wrote it all out on paper, wrapped it about with a piece of oil-skin and I have it snug and dry in my inside pocket. If there's any delay or trouble about my seeing Colonel Rall there won't be any about getting the old man's message to him, and *then* what will become of General Washington and the rest of the traitors?"

In desperation the young patriot appealed to the better nature of the Tory.

"Aaron, why do you do this? You will be sorry for it all your life."

"Sorry for it!" he exclaimed; "I wouldn't miss the chance for ten thousand pounds; I can hardly keep from jumping for joy, even if I am half frozen to death."

Jack Marlton could not restrain his indignation.

"You are the meanest, most cowardly scoun-



drel that was ever allowed to draw the breath of life——”

At that moment, Jack Marlton was knocked almost senseless by a blow on the back of his head. The drunken soldier brought down the butt of his musket with a force that sent the youth forward several paces and came nigh throwing him on his face in the icy, muddy street.

“Keep your mouth shet!” explained the corporal, who probably ordered the youth to be struck the cruel blow.

Jack was so infuriated that only by a strong effort could he restrain himself from attacking the brute like a tiger. His rage was intensified by the fact that the Tory at his side had not been touched, though it was he who opened the conversation. It was evident that the three men had learned the principles of their prisoners.

The Tory was mean enough to gloat over the outrage his companion had just suffered, and, knowing that he himself was safe from harm, he laughed :

“How did it feel, Jack!”

It was running great risk to violate on the instant, as may be said, the order of the brutal guard, but Jack did it, lowering his voice just enough to prevent any ears, excepting those for which they were intended, from hearing his words :

“If you open your mouth again, I’ll jump onto you and beat the life from your body before any one can stop me !”

The conversation ended.

The walk along First Street was comparatively brief. On the right, which was toward the river, the party moved a short distance over the sleet and mud and paused in front of a low, small building that was really a barn. It consisted of a single room, something more than twenty feet square, with a mow overhead, partly filled with hay. There were no stalls below, so that it had been used simply to hold fodder, the animals being kept in another building a short distance away.

This structure was one of the guard-houses of the Hessians during their occupancy of Trenton. The floor was the cold bare earth, there was not a spark of fire in the building, and the only thing suggesting a bed or couch was the hay which some kind hand had flung down from the loft overhead.

From the rafters hung four lanterns, whose candles dimly lit up the gloomy interior. There was but a single door, and one of the lights was suspended over this, while a guard stood with loaded musket on the inside, and another in the storm outside. It was the latter who received the prisoner Jack Marlton, and, thrusting the sharp point of his bayonet against his hip, said :

“In dere ! Go !”

Needless to say, Jack did not delay in obeying. He took several steps, and then paused and looked around to see whether his Tory companion would join him. He did not. Through the driving storm Jack heard the mur-

mur of voices, but no Aaron Wagstaff put in his appearance. Why should he be held a prisoner, when clearly a friend?

“Within half an hour,” reflected Jack Marlton with anguish, “Colonel Rall will receive that message. God help General Washington!”

His prayer was really for his country, but to him, that and Washington were one and the same, and who can question the correctness of his view?

Convinced that it was intended he should occupy this prison indefinitely, the wretched Jack braced himself with the grim heroism that he had inherited from his father and which, therefore, was a part of his nature.

He looked up at the lanterns, the mow, and the rafters, dimly outlined in the gloom overhead. Then he surveyed the hay scattered over the icy ground. Here and there a form was discerned. There were four in all lying doubled up and as motionless as if they were dead.

Each had a blanket drawn around him, and was so covered with that and the protecting hay that barely more than the outlines of his form could be distinguished, though the sound of heavy breathing showed all were sleeping soundly. Doubtless they were soldiers who had been celebrating the day too heavily so they had been tumbled into the guard-house to remain until they sobered up.

The door was closed, and with only a glance at it, Jack walked over the hay to the opposite side of the cheerless room and sat down with his back against the heavy boards. Two causes led him to do this. The first was that it located him as remotely as possible from the drunken sleepers, and the other was that it placed him directly beneath the single window with which the lower part of the barn was provided. The sash that had originally been there had been smashed, and the opening was crossed by bars of iron, which of course were no protection against the wet or cold.

It may seem to have been imprudent on the part of Jack Marlton, but, by sitting close under the window, he escaped the arctic wind and sleet that drove through, for both were carried so far over his head that he felt none of their effects. While every portion of the dismal structure was cold, cheerless and wofully uncomfortable, he had chosen the most favorable spot, if any spot at all could be considered favorable.

Besides, an odd question took vague form in his mind—

“Perhaps that window may prove a friend to me.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

## FRITZ.

It would be hard to picture a more dismal, cheerless and wretched situation than that of Jack Marlton.

He sat down in the hay of the gloomy barn and drew a quantity of it about his body. There was precious little warmth in it, and his teeth chattered with the cold. Be it remembered that it was on that eventful night that two of Washington's hardy soldiers were frozen to death while making their march through the sleet and driving tempest to Trenton, and many others suffered severely from the fearful temperature.

Jack's teeth rattled like castanets ; there was no way of drying his saturated clothing, which

crackled with ice whenever he moved his limbs or body. But for his youthful vigor he must have succumbed, as did many another patriot on the eve of the battle of Trenton.

But wretched as he was in body, he suffered mentally to a more intense degree. Perhaps it was merciful that such was the fact, for it imparted a feverish glow to his frame and thereby helped to fight off the insidious approach of that drowsiness and stupor which is invariably fatal to any one exposed to extreme cold.

The most exasperating reflection that can torment a person is that his despairing situation is the result of his own short-sightedness. Jack recalled that he had noticed the boat of Aaron Wagstaff lying against the bank, on passing the house of the Tory earlier in the day, and when he went to help watch the traitors he knew it was still there, and yet it never occurred to him that it was likely to serve the purpose to which it was applied.

He felt there was some excuse for his father,



and, perhaps to a less degree, for the guard that had been placed around the house by order of General Washington, for they were strangers in the neighborhood and were not likely to think of the craft; but there was none for Jack Marlton himself.

He had been nerved to a state of exaltation by the belief that it was to be his happy lot to render the Father of his Country a great service, and he had utterly failed to accomplish anything. He had come within a hair's breadth of checking the Tory in his daring flight across the Delaware, but that, too, miscarried, and here he was a prisoner of the Hessians.

Why think further about it? And yet he could not help thinking of it. The Tory had been permitted to go free, and no doubt by that time Colonel Rall was reading or had already read the momentous note of Saros Wagstaff, and was making disposition of his troops to baffle the exultant patriots, hurrying from the Delaware to attack them in town.

Jack listened for sounds that would indicate such preparation. The sleet and snow rattled against the boards and on the shingles over head, a deep murmur came from the direction of the river where the masses of ice still craunched and tumbled and ground together, the shouts of revelers were heard in the streets, and the heavy breathing of the doubled-up form nearest him made itself heard through these other sounds. But they had been in his ears from the first. He could hear nothing like hoarse commands, the call of bugles and the hurrying to and fro of horses and men. But all that must soon come.

Drawing his knees close to his body, with the hay inclosing his form, and his arms clasped about his lower limbs, Jack looked across the dismal room at the figure of the sentinel, who had assumed an unmilitary posture by leaning against the jamb of the door. His musket rested on his shoulder, and he seemed to be gazing steadily at the young prisoner.

The stiff hat with its projecting brim shaded his forehead from the rays of the lanterns, but Jack noted the lower part of his face, which was covered with a grizzled goatee and with a huge mustache shading his upper lip. He was tall and spare, and the lad plainly saw the glitter of his dark eyes under his visor as he looked steadily at him.

"I wonder whether he has ever seen me before," the lad asked himself, unable to recall how such could be the case, since he had not been in Trenton for the past month; "he knows I am a rebel and it may be he is asking himself whether it isn't best to send a bullet through me. If it wasn't for mother and father I wouldn't care a penny if he did; I am of no use to anybody, and, if I should ask General Washington to take me as a soldier, he would tell me I'm worth nothing to him or any one else."

Evil thoughts were passing through the brain of the Hessian. If they partook of the sinister

nature suspected by the hapless Jack, they were dissipated by an unexpected interference. The door was suddenly pushed inward and another soldier, his garments covered with sleet and ice, stepped quickly into the prison.

He had come to exchange places or rather to relieve the sentinel on duty. The method of doing so was unmilitary, for regulations required a certain formula to be gone through with by the sergeant or corporal of the guard, but all this was disregarded in the present instance when Trenton was almost topsy-turvy with merry-making. In truth, the two men were friends, and the new arrival had come voluntarily to take the place of the man on duty, whose time for relief was still a full hour away.

But he was anxious to go to a certain spot, where he would find a dark-eyed Tory lass in whom he felt more than a passing interest. It was a great favor indeed when his friend relieved him, though in a comparatively short

while the good Samaritan would be free to relinquish his trying task.

There was a hurried exchange in German, and then the sentinel, whose garments were dry, strode out into the storm, and the one who was cold and wet took his place. He, too, rested his musket on his shoulder, but he did not loll against the side of the door, though he faced about and looked at Jack Marlton with the same steadiness as his predecessor.

“ I should like to know what the mischief those fellows see to interest them so much in me,” mused the puzzled Jack ; “ if he wants to make my acquaintance, why doesn’t he come over here and introduce himself ? ”

As if in answer to this thought, the guard at that moment left his station and walked across the hay directly toward the crouching lad, who was startled by his action.

As he approached, his relative change of position caused the light of one of the lanterns to show his face quite distinctly. It was smoothly

shaven, broad, like his own stocky figure, and he was unmistakably grinning.

But it seemed that it was the window and not the prisoner which interested the Hessian. Apparently without looking at the latter, he reached out his hand and tried the iron bars in succession. He seemed to finger and tug at one of them, as if doubtful of its stability, but he was through at last, and then, looking down at Jack, he asked with the same grin and in a low voice, as if afraid of awaking one of the heavy sleepers:

“How you do?”

“I suppose I am well, but I couldn’t feel more miserable.”

The Hessian grinned more expansively than before.

“You does not remember me?”

“We have never met before; how could I remember you?”

“Dere vos vere you is mistookken; I am Fritz ven you brings dat tam fool of a Tory and you

vos a bigger tam fool 'cos you hollered out loud dat you vos a rebel,—eh, vot you tinks ?”

Jack Marlton was astounded. In the gloom at the riverside, it was impossible for him to see the face of the sentinel, but other circumstances made it easy for the Hessian to identify him. The boy's face lighted up, and he started to rise to his feet, but Fritz motioned him to remain where he was.

“Don't do dot !” he said hurriedly, speaking so low that Jack was hardly able to hear him with the noise of the raging storm in his ears. “Bime-by mebbe somepody come to the door, and ven he sees me talking mit you he say ‘tam.’”

“Why, Fritz, I never dreamed it was you.”

“Jim, vot vos here when I took his place,—he want to shoot you 'cause you be a rebel, He tells me you looks as if you might git away.—so I comes ober and I looks at the winder,—yaw ! yaw !”

The stocky fellow shook with silent laughter and then suddenly controlling himself added :

“De winder be not very strong,—one ob de bars ish loose,—I must looks out dat no tam rebel slips out ven my back is turned.”

“If you want me to promise, Fritz, that I will take no advantage of your kindness, I am ready to give my parole.”

“Who ask for your parole?” demanded the Hessian angrily, “vait till somebody don’t ask it and den mebbe you vos not so big a tam fool as you is alretty,—eh, don’t it?”

When excited, Fritz seemed to speak more brokenly than at other times. The grin had gone from his broad, good-humored countenance and he looked as if really angry from some cause with the American youth of whom he had expressed so favorable an opinion but a short time before.

Jack Marlton was not slow mentally and a glimmering suspicion flashed into his brain. The candle-light shone full upon his upturned face, and, looking up at the sentinel, he did not speak, but smiled and solemnly winked one eye.



“Vat for you winks at me, you rebel? Don’t do dat agin or I—I—bur-r-r!” and he puffed his cheeks and shook his head, as if unable to express his rage, but there was no deception this time. His grin was more tremendous than before, and displayed his big white teeth, while his eyes sparkled.

Since his protest was uttered in louder words than he had been using, the fact gave rise to the suspicion that they were intended for the ears of some of the forms doubled up in the hay, if perchance any of them were awake. Jack did not attempt any reply, but, strive as he might, he could not smooth out the smile on his own face.

As if not daring to trust himself further, Fritz strode angrily to his position by the door. Then he stood for a full minute, looking straight at Jack Marlton, who might have felt uneasy under the fixedness of the stare, had he not been sure of its meaning.

The lad made a movement as if to rise to his

feet, but paused when partly up, so that his posture was a stooping one. For another minute, the guard did not stir a muscle; *then he deliberately turned his back on the prisoner.*

## CHAPTER XV.

## THROUGH MISHAP AND PERIL.

JACK MARLTON rose like a shadow to the upright posture. The Hessian remained as motionless as a statue with his back toward him.

The change of position brought the head and shoulders of the youth above the sill of the window, and chilled as he already was, he shivered when the sleet struck his face and neck. But he bravely faced the tempest and grasped the lower bar of iron which crossed the window. He exerted a tremendous pull, but it remained as firm as if imbedded in solid rock.

The window was so slight in extent that three rods crossing it horizontally were sufficient to prevent the egress of the smallest man. He seized the middle bar, and, throwing all his

strength into the effort, drew furiously backward. The resistance was so slight that it was really none at all, and Jack went over in the straw, grasping the iron with both hands, and with his feet pointed toward the rafters.

Amid the racket, he fancied he heard a sound resembling suppressed laughter, and, as he climbed hastily to his feet, he looked around. The sentinel's back was toward him, but, unless he was greatly mistaken, Jack caught a glimpse of the broad, red face at the instant it whisked away, and there could be but one cause for the quivering of those huge wet shoulders.

Jack Marlton, as has been shown, was of sturdy frame and was thickly clothed. Fearing that the space he had opened was not large enough for his body, he tried to wrench the topmost bar from its fastenings, but it was as strongly imbedded as the lowermost, and did not yield so much as a hair.

"I guess I can make it," was his thought, as again holding fast to the upper one, he drew



JACK SUDDENLY WENT OUT OF THE WINDOW HEAD FIRST, INTO A POOL OF WATER.  
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himself slightly upward, thrust his head through and began vigorously working his body between the two rods. It was a tight squeeze, and twice he thought he was inextricably fast, but working desperately, he suddenly went out head first, dropping on his face into a pool of water and ice.

It was as dark as Egypt, but when he struggled to his feet, he could not help turning about and peeping through the window.

There was the gloomy interior, dimly lit up by the suspended lanterns, the mow on the right, the hay on the floor, with two of the sleepers visible, and directly opposite was the single door of the barn. And beside that door, stood Fritz the sentinel, not with his back turned, but facing about, with a grin that seemed to reach his ears, while his whole body shook with merriment.

“Heaven bless you !” muttered Jack Marlton ; “the Hessians aren’t very popular in this part of the world but you are a good fellow.”



Fritz moved hurriedly across the floor, picked up the displaced rod and carefully restored it to place. Before doing this he thrust his head between the other bars, and blinking in the sleet, attempted to peer into the impenetrable darkness. He could see nothing, and it may have been he depended on his hearing, but that was equally at fault, and he drew his head back again, made the window look as it was before, and returned to his former position by the door.

Jack would have been glad to express his thanks to his friend, or to communicate with him in some manner, but he feared it would not be pleasing to him, and he began picking his way from the spot.

This was difficult, for, familiar as he was with Trenton, he could not be expected to know the back-yards and all of the out-of-the-way places. He recalled in what part of the town he was, but of his immediate surroundings had no more knowledge than if dropped from a balloon into the interior of Africa.



He understood he must pass around from the rear to the front, in order to reach the street where he would feel at home, provided no one molested him, but in whatever direction he looked, he could not catch a glimpse of the slightest illumination. Moreover, that peculiar lightness to which I have referred, seemed to have departed for the time, so that, had the lad held his hand in front of his face, he would have been unable to detect so much as its outlines.

“I guess I won’t have any trouble,” he thought, as, with hands outstretched, he began cautiously feeling his way forward; “all I’ve got to do——”

Some one had stretched a clothesline across the dark space over which Jack was groping, and under the thorough wetting it received, it had shrunk as taut as a wire. Slipping directly under his chin, he was almost lifted off his feet, and an abrupt change was produced in the current of his thoughts.

"My gracious!" he muttered, rubbing his throat; "I thought it had sawed my head off, but I believe it is still on my shoulders."

The fear that there might be another branch of the line caused him now to hold his hands higher than before, while he advanced literally inch by inch.

We always take in our line when it rains and I don't see why other folks don't do it; as like as not—great Cæsar!"

Since it was impossible to see where he placed his feet, and the ground was covered with ice and sleet, Jack's shoes at that instant shot forward and he sat down with so sudden a thump that the whole night was illumined by myriads of stars, and his teeth rattled more violently than ever before. But his thick clothing and his rugged frame prevented any serious injury from the jar.

"I wonder how long this thing will keep up," he said, carefully climbing to his feet and disposed to smile at his predicament; "it begins

to look as if Fritz had let me out of the frying-pan into the fire."

For a few steps he made fair progress. Looking behind him, he could see the dim glow of the yellow light from the lanterns as the rays straggled through the barred window ; but that was of no help, since he could not return, and he was still in utter ignorance of his surroundings, but he reflected that if he kept on he must come out *somewhere*, and he continued to advance with a care that could not have been greater.

"If I had known that I was ever to climb into this place," he reflected, giving rein to his queer fancies, "I would have come over from home last summer and studied the lay of the land——"

This time, he banged against the side of a board fence, with a violence that was strange, considering the caution he put forth ; but he struck it fairly, his cap flying off, while he was sure that his nose was so flattened that it would never recover its normal shape. He had not

drawn on his mittens, since he removed them for the purpose of handling the oars and pole of his boat. His hands were chilled, but he thought it better to keep them uncovered until his eyes could serve him to better purpose.

The fact that he had collided with the fence indicated that he was making some progress ; and since the boards were in the nature of an obstruction, he naturally felt that it was imperatively necessary for him to place himself on the other side.

“ It can’t be very high and I can climb over it.”

Reaching upward, he failed to touch the top.

“ It’s higher than I thought, but I can make it by jumping.”

Stooping down, he made an energetic leap upward, both hands extended to grasp the top. His finger-tips just touched it, and, as he dropped back on his feet, his palms scraped down the side of the boards, gathering several splinters during the process.

“ The top is up there somewhere,” he mut-

tered desperately, as he stooped still lower and put all his strength in the effort. This time, he firmly seized the top, though half prepared to find it studded with needle-like nails, quickly drew himself upward and flung one of his sturdy legs across the jagged support to rest himself for a moment.

“ Well, I’ve got so far,” he muttered with a sigh of hope, “ and by George ! I’m going somewhere else,” he added, as the frail support gave way under his weight. Evidently the fence had not been constructed with a view of holding up lusty young patriots, for, before Jack could help himself, it went down with a crash that he was sure must have been heard several rods away, despite the turmoil of the tempest.

If he had been unfortunate in his attempts to reach the street from the rear of the guard-house, he had been extremely fortunate in another respect, in that he escaped personal injury, despite the severe bumping and jars he underwent. The fence went down as if it were

waiting until he ensconced himself on the top, when it collapsed in a twinkling. Jack knew he was not hurt, but the most alarming discovery of all accompanied the crash of the fence. Just beyond, he caught the twinkle of a light from the lower story of a house, only a few paces distant, and with the glimpse he heard the ominous growling of a huge dog, which bounded out of the gloom and rushed toward him, as if he, like the fence, was waiting until his victim was inextricably in his power.

But again, the wonderful good luck of the youth remained with him. The massive canine arrived like a thunderburst, and Jack felt his nose jammed against his own cold face, as he began climbing to his feet ; but the brute did not bite nor make any attempt to bite him. The lad addressed him soothingly and the animal, after nosing around for a few minutes, seemed to be satisfied, and trotted off to the shelter of his kennel, possibly through disgust with the weather.

“ I wonder if he knows who I am,” was the grim query of Jack Marlton, who was once more upright ; “ maybe he concluded not to chew me up, feeling sure he could have more fun in keeping under shelter and watching me break my neck.”

But his situation had improved. While all was blank darkness behind, there was light in front. The house sat low on the ground, and a glow showed at a rear window. There was no closed shutter, but the interior was hidden by a curtain drawn across the panes.

Jack formed a sudden resolution to ask for hospitality. He was not only wet and cold, but involved in such a labyrinth of turnings and windings, that he doubted whether he could go any further before daylight, except with the certainty of receiving grievous injury. His good luck could not last.

It was only a few paces to the door at the side of the window, and he advanced with more confidence than he had yet shown. He had

not reached it, when, as if she had heard something of the racket, a young woman suddenly opened the door and stood revealed by the light of a roaring fire of logs behind her.

Jack instantly increased his pace, calling out cheerily :

“ Good evening, Miss ! Don’t be frightened ; for I am only——”

His haste brought the inevitable catastrophe, for he made the last few paces of the intervening distance on his back, with his feet almost carrying the woman off her balance. She saved herself by leaping back a step with a startled exclamation :

“ My goodness ! what’s the matter with you ? ” she gasped.

“ Nothing at all,” replied Jack, picking up his cap, which had been again displaced ; “ the walking doesn’t seem to be good in this part of the country.”

“ Are you hurt ? ” she asked pityingly.

“ Nothing to speak of ; I think I have broken



both legs, one of my arms and my neck is twisted about a foot to one side. Were you expecting me ? ” he asked grimly.

“ Why, I thought you were Jim,” was the innocent reply.

“ Won’t you accept me as Jim for a little while, till I can warm myself ? ” he asked, turning his handsome, smiling face toward the comely maid so pleadingly that she restrained herself from shutting the door in his face ; “ I am nearly frozen, and you can see how wet my clothing is. I need warmth to save my life,” he added more seriously, taking a step into the cosy room.

The woman’s heart melted and she closed the door not in front but behind him.

“ You are welcome,” she said graciously ; “ I don’t know how soon Jim will be back, but you can stay till he comes.”

The situation was plain. Jim was keeping company with the young woman and she was waiting for his return. He had been there, and

was called away for a time, but there was little doubt of his return, else she would not have been up at this late hour, for, though there was no timepiece in sight, it was certainly beyond midnight, and it was apparent that the people of the house were unaware of the visitor below stairs.

Jack Marlton had entered the kitchen, which was clean and tidy. Best of all, a big fire on the hearth filled the room with a glowing warmth that gave new life to him. Apologizing and thanking the girl for her permission, he placed himself so near the blazing logs that the steam began ascending in clouds from his saturated and frozen clothing.

"May I know your name?" he asked respectfully of the girl, who had seated herself a little distance away.

"Mary Brown."

"Well, Mary, I shall never forget your kindness."

"Who are you and where did you come from?"

"My name is Jack Marlton and my home is in Pennsylvania, which you know is on the other side of the river. I lost my way, when I happened to see your light, and, being chilled through, I made bold to ask for shelter for a short time."

This answer, while truthful as far as it went, did not satisfy the young woman, who evidently was suspicious.

"I don't understand how, if you lost your way, you got into the back-yard of Mr. Gilman's house."

"Do you suppose I would have gotten there if I hadn't lost my way, Mary? I thought I was pretty well acquainted with Trenton, but there are some parts that are new to me."

"But you had to climb the fences to get into our yard."

"I climbed only one fence."

"What made you do that?"

"It got right across my path and it was so dark I couldn't see my way round it."

“But why did you climb it at all?” persisted the young woman.

Jack did not think it safe to tell her the whole truth, for there was no saying what her political sentiments were. She might be a Tory as ready to do him harm as was Aaron Wagstaff. While he could not tell a falsehood, he thought himself warranted in misleading her.

“You know there are a good many drunken soldiers abroad on Christmas night and I think it best to keep out of their way. But tell me please, who Jim is.”

“He is one of Colonel Rall’s soldiers; he went round to the guard-house a little while ago to shoot a young rebel they caught this evening; then he’s coming back to spend the rest of the evening with me. It’s about time he is here, for it won’t take him long to kill the little rebel. I wish he would hurry up.”

## CHAPTER XVI.

PAST MIDNIGHT.

JACK MARLTON suddenly concluded that his clothing was sufficiently dried and there was no need of his remaining longer in the kitchen of the house in which he had taken shelter.

“Jim ” was liable to put in an appearance at any moment, and, to say the least, unpleasant complications were sure to follow.

“I guess I’ll go now, Mary ; I’m much obliged to you for your kindness.”

“Why, your clothes are not half-dry,” she protested ; “wait till Jim comes, for I will feel safer with company.”

“I—I am in a hurry and have stayed too long already,” said the lad, walking quickly to the door and drawing it open ; “good night !”

In the flood of light which streamed out into the sleet, Jack saw the figure of a man, tall, erect, dripping, in Hessian uniform, and with a musket in his hand. He was only a few paces away, and was so clearly revealed in the glowing firelight that the lad recognized him on the instant as the soldier who was acting as guard over him, when relieved by the kinder-hearted Fritz.

He must have been astonished at sight of the sturdy figure, for he stared wonderingly without moving. The same cannot be said of Jack Marlton, who was out of the door in a twinkling, and hurrying around the rear of the house and toward the front, which, it will be noted, was in the direction of the river. He was running a risk of another bad fall, but it would not do to hesitate. He slipped once or twice, but kept to his feet, and while still groping onward, found that he had debouched upon the small street which ran for a little way parallel to First Street and the Delaware.

No fence separated the dwelling from this avenue, but a glimmering light here and there helped the lad to recognize where he was. He turned to the right and proceeded with more caution.

Less than half a dozen steps were taken in this guarded fashion, when he heard footfalls in the darkness behind him. They were undoubtedly those of Jim, who having learned the identity of the fugitive, had set out to complete the fearful duty that took him from the side of Mary.

“Hold on dere!” called the Hessian, unable to discern anything in the midnight sleet but well aware that his victim could not be far off.

Jack’s hand touched the trunk of an immense oak, which grew at the side of the path and between it and the highway. He stopped short, and silently moved around the icy bark so as to interpose it between him and his enemy. It seemed impossible that the latter should hear

the movements of the youth, but Jack took no chances he could avoid.

“Hold on dere!” called the half-drunken Hessian; “you tam rebel, I vants——”

There was a crash and the fellow went down on the broad of his back with a violence that fairly made the earth tremble and would have cracked his skull had it not been of unusual thickness. That he was not killed, was proven by the volley of oaths uttered in German as the wretch began gingerly climbing to his feet and felt around in the gloom for his musket and hat.

Jack Marlton shook with silent mirth.

“Good!” he thought to himself; “he’s getting a little of the fun I had awhile ago.”

Jim must have made up his mind that the job he had undertaken was an unprofitable one, for he turned about and groped back to the more comfortable kitchen, where his sweetheart waited to bathe his wounds and speak words of soothing cheer.



There were some features about this incident which, even in his disturbed mental state, puzzled Jack Marlton. Jim, as has already been stated, was the Hessian on duty when Fritz appeared and voluntarily took his place. That the friendly German did this for the express purpose of giving Jack a chance of escaping could not be doubted, and the reason for his course must have been that he knew the young rebel was in danger of his life. It followed, therefore, dreadful as it may sound, that when Jim scanned his prisoner so closely, he was meditating the dreadful crime of shooting him while helpless and in his power. Probably he would have carried out his purpose, but for the timely coming of Fritz.

The remarkable feature, however, was that, after resigning his place to his comrade, he should have deliberately left the side of Mary Brown and gone back to the guard-house with the intention of carrying out his murderous design. While this proved that he had no sus-

picion of Fritz's friendship for the prisoner, it argued a cold-blooded cruelty that seems incredible. It argue sfurther that the miscreant contemplated a crime which civilized warfare punishes severely, and yet there was no hesitation on the part of the wretch, who most likely would have shot Jack Marlton before Fritz could have interfered.

In partial explanation of the extraordinary proceedings, it should be said that most of the Hessians were lawless, cruel and savage to the last degree. There were 1,500 of them quartered in and about Trenton ; they stole from the people, abused the old men and children, insulted the women, robbed right and left, and indulged in wanton outrages that made their presence like a deadly plague. If a soldier on the street chose to strike down one of the inhabitants by a blow from his musket, or if an officer for a fancied insult drove his sword through the body of an unoffending man, there was no redress. It will be understood, therefore, that when Jim,

yielding to his murderous mood, and made more murderous doubtless by the strong drink he had swallowed, started to return to the guard-house for the purpose of shooting an inoffensive youth, he was not troubled by any fear of consequences to himself. Learning from Mary that his intended victim had just left her presence, or perhaps, suspecting his identity from the glimpse caught of him as he whisked off in the darkness, the Hessian made after him. The gloom was all that saved Jack Marlton from serving as the target of the Hessian's musket.

Still further, it must be remembered that these incidents occurred on Christmas night, 1776, when the lax discipline among the invaders of Trenton was more lax than usual, and the majority of the officers and soldiers were partly or wholly intoxicated.

The situation of Jack was better than before, and, finding himself freed from the malignity of the Hessian, he picked his way with little difficulty to the corner of the street near at hand,

Passing up the slight incline, he crossed First Street and continued on toward Second Street, which, you will bear in mind, was the main avenue of the town at that time, as it is to-day known under the name of State Street.

Relieved of immediate personal danger, Jack did not forget that so long as he stayed in town, he was exposed to a certain degree of peril. Now, since many of the citizens as well as the soldiers were on the street, and the interference was no greater than usual, except so far as was due to the merrymaking, which kept many abroad longer than at other times,—it would seem there was no reason why suspicion should be directed toward the young patriot. Why should he be singled out from others who walked to and fro unmolested ?

There was no reason for such distinction, except on the part of those who recognized him. It looked as if Jim and Fritz were the only ones who could do this, and there ought to have been no cause to fear either. Fritz was a friend, and

Jim was not likely to leave the side of his sweetheart to hunt for a youthful rebel toward whom he had no grounds for special spite.

But Aaron Wagstaff! *He* was base enough to encompass the death of Jack, if the opportunity presented. Where was he and what was he doing?

These questions brought Jack Marlton's thoughts back to the momentous theme that had engaged them for hours past, and that had brought him into all this danger.

Surely if Colonel Rall had received the message from the Tory, he had not acted upon it, for the signs on the streets showed no unusual excitement. On any other night, the citizens would have been in their homes and sleeping, with only the guards passing back and forth on their dismal beats, but, as has been shown, it was different now because it was Christmas night.

Jack was perplexed for an explanation of this state of things. He recalled that he had heard

Colonel Rall held the Americans in contempt, and had said many times that he had not the slightest fear of an attack from them; but I have already said he had proven himself a good soldier, and therefore was not the one to turn down a warning like that which the young Tory had brought from his father.

Jack could figure out but one explanation: despite the time that had elapsed, something had interfered to prevent Aaron delivering his letter to the Hessian commander.

“But he will do so any minute——”

The young patriot caught his breath, for of all the shocks received that evening, the greatest came to him, when he recognized Aaron Wagstaff less than a dozen paces in front of him!

Now, if you choose to visit Trenton to-day and look around you, you will discover well out on State Street (and first beyond Warren) a cross avenue, called Willow, which slopes downward to Front, where it ends. Willow Street was there in the Revolution, and Jack Marlton

was making his way up it to Second (State), when by the glimmering light from a house on his left, he recognized Aaron Wagstaff coming toward him.

Jack being in deeper gloom was not identified by his enemy, who approached without any suspicion of the truth. Moreover, it must be added that Jack was shocked to note, from the slightly uncertain gait of the Tory, that he, like most other people that night, was feeling the effect of liquor, though to a less extent than were the majority of those who were celebrating the "auspicious occasion."

A startling resolution crystallized in Jack Marlton's mind.

"He hasn't given his note to Colonel Rall; I'll take it from him!"

Aaron Wagstaff was coming along the unpaved street, with no thought of harm, when something like a catapult crashed against him from the gloom and bore him backward to the ground. A hand was at his throat, while the

other tore open his heavy coat and began hastily running through his pockets.

“What do you want? I hain’t got any money,” spluttered the Tory, struggling vainly to free himself from the iron pressure that impeded his utterance.

“Give me that letter to Colonel Rall! If you want to save your life let me have it right off!”

“I hain’t got any letter for Colonel Rall.”

“You have and I know it! Let me have it or I’ll choke you to death!”

It must have flashed upon the Tory just then that he was in the grip of his old acquaintance, for still sputtering and writhing he managed to say:

“I *did* have it, Jack! But I gave it to Colonel Rall two hours ago; you’re too late, as you’ve been every time to-night. Let me up!”

With a sickening heart, Jack Marlton searched every pocket, but the little package wrapped in oilskin was missing. He did not doubt that Aaron spoke the truth and the momentous letter





"GIVE ME THAT LETTER TO COLONEL RALL," DEMANDED JACK, "IF YOU WANT TO SAVE YOUR LIFE."—Page 226.

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had been delivered some time before to the Hessian commander.

Had the young patriot been given time in which to deliberate, he probably would not have made his assault, for, suppose he had recovered the letter, how would it have availed him, since the Tory could deliver his message just as well by word of mouth? Possibly it would have had less effect than a written one, signed by a personage whose sentiments were known to Colonel Rall, but the ultimate result of such a warning would have been as effective as a written one.

Jack was angered enough to administer a beating to Wagstaff on "general principles" as may be said, but he refrained, and permitted him to climb to his feet.

"Take another drink, and you'll tumble down on the street and freeze to death; it would be the best thing that could happen to you."

By way of reply, the Tory raised his voice and yelled at the top of his lungs:

“ Watch ! watch ! I’m robbed ! A rebel spy is here ! Quick ! ”

The startling words were in the mouth of Wagstaff, when to Jack Marlton’s alarm, he heard, amid the sleet, the sound of some one running toward them in response to the call of the Tory. That he was a guard was proven the next moment, when he called out :

“ Shtop ! or I shoots ! ”

## CHAPTER XVII.

## NEAR MORNING.

THERE was not a moment to spare. 'The guard was almost upon Jack Marlton, when he turned to run for his life. He was fleet of foot and familiar with that part of the town, but the same was to be said of the Hessian, who gripped him by the collar before he could run a dozen steps, and held him immovably, though the youth struggled with might and main to free himself.

The Tory dashed up.

"He's a rebel spy ! he's been sneaking round town all night to find out something to tell General Washington ! Why don't you kill him ?"

"Mebbe you vos kills him,—don't it ?" suggested the guard.

"I would do so, but he stabbed me, so I feel faint. Oh, how I would like to get at him !"

"I lets you got at him," said the soldier, who

seemed to be in an accommodating mood that Christmas night; "you and he fights mit him out, don't it?"

But this was a contingency that the Tory had not counted on.

"I'd do it some other time but—but—Colonel Rall wants to see me," and Wagstaff turned about and hurried up the street toward Second, on which the Hessian commander had his headquarters with the merchant, Abraham Hunt.

Despite the words of the guard, he had not once loosened his grip on the collar of Jack Marlton's coat. He stood quiet for a moment after the departure of the Tory, for, despite the latter's outcry, no one else had been attracted to the spot. When they were alone, the Hessian released his hold, and with a tone of deep disgust, said :

"You vos de tamnedest fool dot I never seed!"

"Why, Fritz, is that you?" exclaimed the delighted Jack, recognizing for the first time the

voice of his old friend ; " I thought I was a goner this time sure."

" So you vos ! you makes me sick ; vot ain't de matter ? "

" Why what have I done, Fritz ? "

" Dit you hear dot lobster yell out like a house afire ? "

" I didn't know he would do it ; he did it before I could stop him."

" Why you not pound his head off afore he yells ? "

Jack understood him now. He was angry because the young patriot had not " done up " the Tory off-hand and thus quenched his voice.

" I'll remember next time," said the youth meekly ; " he's a bad fellow and it would serve him right."

" You vos better go somewhere else ; you goes mit me, don't it ? "

Jack never did anything more willingly than when he accompanied his strange friend. He



might have felt some misgiving, when he saw they were walking down Willow toward First Street, on which the guard-house stood, but for his confidence in Fritz, who had already done so much for him.

They passed a hundred yards or more beyond the guard-house, in front of which a lantern gleamed in the sleety darkness, and then, turning to the right, which was on the same side, stumbled through the night to the rear of a dwelling, where all was gloom ; but evidently Fritz knew where he was, and, like many of his companions, had a sweetheart within convenient distance.

He had to take the hand of Jack to guide him down some short steps, when he knocked on the door, repeating the summons several times, before it was answered from within. It was the peculiarity of the knock, that caused it to be recognized, for, when a twinkling candle showed through the window, the fastenings were unbarred without hesitation, the door was drawn



backward and a blushing maid stood before them.

At first Jack was startled by the belief that the girl was the same Mary from whose presence he had hurried, but a glance at her face showed his mistake, though the impression might have been strengthened by the appearance of the kitchen, where a glowing fire of hickory logs roared up the big chimney, and everything wore the same air of neatness.

While Fritz and the girl were talking in German, the youth walked into the room and sat down on one of the splint-bottomed chairs. Though he could not understand a word of the conversation, which was rapid and in low tones, he thought it would be in good taste for him to keep his back toward the lovers, and carefully avoid looking at them. They talked for a considerable time in low tones, and it is natural to believe they indulged in a number of endearments.

In one sense, Jack was employed as pleas-

antly as they, for the room glowed with the most delightful warmth. Seated in the comfortable chair, thoroughly tired out from the exposure and hard work of the evening, a drowsiness gradually overcame him, and with the hum of the lovers' voices in his ears like a lullaby, his senses departed and he sank into the deep, refreshing sleep of youth and health.

The nights were the longest of the year, but even this long, tempestuous and historical night was drawing to an end. It was far along when Jack made his perilous venture across the Delaware in pursuit of the young Tory, and midnight was well past at the time he effected his escape from the dismal prison, thanks to the friendly help of the Hessian Fritz, who was much the superior mentally and morally of most of his companions. It was Jack's manly truthfulness which gave the German his first thrill of admiration, and when the dim lantern in the prison revealed the pleasing countenance of the youth, the soldier was attracted still more toward him.

It is hardly necessary to make this statement, in view of the incidents already recorded.

Besides all that, every man with a spark of honor or patriotism in his breast respects honor and patriotism in another. We may be defeated and overcome by a foe, but, if that foe is defending his own fireside and country, we hold him in higher esteem therefor. Benedict Arnold was considered valuable enough for the British General Clinton to pay him thirty thousand dollars in gold for his services, for before the purchase, he had proven himself to be one of the bravest officers who ever drew a sword ; but every man in the British army, and indeed all England, felt an inexpressible contempt for the American who betrayed his country. The reader does not need to be reminded of the ostracism to which Arnold was subjected in London, nor of his lonely and miserable death.

Something of the same sentiment, though in a less degree, actuated the course of Fritz. He saw before him two youths, one of whom was

risking his life for his country, while the other was doing all he could against it. It mattered not that the latter and the Hessian were allies, nor the fact that the soldiers from Hesse Cassel were mercenaries in the true sense of the word, since they were hired by England to help fight her battles in America. Fritz didn't like such allies.

But to return to Jack Marlton asleep in the chair. Fritz must have said something pleasant about him to his sweetheart, whose name also was Mary, for she walked softly in front of the youth, and looked for a moment at the handsome ruddy countenance. The head had fallen to one side on his shoulder, but he was sleeping as soundly as if in his bed at home.

Looking at him for a minute only, Mary tripped lightly up-stairs, and quickly returned with a pillow and blanket. These were carefully adjusted on the floor, and then the muscular girl raised him to his feet. Jack partly awoke, mumbled brokenly, gave slight help, and then

slumped helplessly down. He was so overcome that it would require a much greater disturbance than that to awaken him.

Mary folded the blanket over him, saw that the head rested comfortably on the pillow, and then she went away, closing the door behind her as she passed up-stairs again.

I have said that it needed a greater shock than that which was caused by the incident just described to rouse Jack Marlton to his full senses. That shock came within the ten minutes following the departure of Mary, and made him leap to his feet, as if awakened by the "crack of doom."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE ALARM.

You have been told something about Abraham Hunt, who, during, before and after the Revolution, was the leading merchant in Trenton town. I well remember the house in which he lived on the corner of Queen and Second (now Warren and State) Streets, and have been inside of it many times. It was of brick and was such a commodious and imposing structure that it remained standing until only a few years ago, when, as I have stated, it gave way to the present fine structure known as Masonic Hall.

Hunt was wealthy, fond of the good things of life and inclined to luxuries in the way of eating and drinking. His cellar was well stored with excellent wines and liquors, and that person counted himself fortunate who was invited

to enjoy his entertainment. Probably he was an American in his sentiments and wished the colonies well in their struggle for independence, but the old merchant was worldly wise, and, to repeat what I have already said, he did not allow his sentiments to interfere with his business.

Nothing was more natural, therefore, than that when Trenton was occupied by Colonel Rall and his one thousand five hundred Hessians he should place himself on good terms with the military master of the situation. Colonel Johann G. Rall was about fifty years old at the time of which I am speaking, and like most of his countrymen, was as fond of his pipe and his toddy as Hunt. Naturally the two gravitated together, and, when the merchant invited the officer to spend an evening at his house, he gladly did so. It was their custom, on the wintry nights, when the storm howled outside, to sit by the table in the rear room and play cards until well into the small hours of the

morning. A roaring fire on the hearth filled the apartment with glowing warmth, and, as the two faced each other and played, the steaming toddy and pipes made their situation as enjoyable as it could possibly be for two such cronies.

On Christmas night, 1776, they were thus engaged, with little thought of what was going on outside. Each had taken several deep draughts of the spiced rum whose fragrant fumes filled the room, and had a long-stemmed pipe in his mouth, which he slowly puffed as he dealt the cards or played his hand, pausing now and then to take a swallow or two from the hot mug at his elbow. At intervals, the colored man, who was the favorite servant of the merchant, came quietly into the room, stirred the fire, heaped on more logs and made sure that the water in the kettle on the crane over the blaze was kept at the right temperature, and that the supply of spirits did not run too low. He had performed the duty many times before and was



so deft at it that he attracted no notice. Occasionally, when his master looked up and spoke, he answered softly and respectfully, and in short was a model servant in every respect. His duty finished for the time, he moved like a shadow out of the room, certain to return when necessary without being summoned.

The couple had been playing but a few minutes, when Colonel Rall looked abruptly toward the servant and said briskly :

“ George ! ”

“ Yes, sah,” he promptly replied, with a military salute.

“ I vill see not any ones to-night ; don’t forgot vat I says.”

“ Yes, sah,” with another military salute.

“ Remember, George, the wishes of Colonel Rall,” added the merchant.

“ Yes, sah,” and the servant passed noiselessly out of the room.

Colonel Rall never forgot to be considerate to his host. Though a bitter partisan of King

George, he did not obtrude his sentiments upon Hunt. Inevitably there were references to the war, but the Hessian commander carefully refrained from saying anything that could wound the feelings of the merchant. The latter was equally respectful, and whatever his thoughts might have been, he never said a word that could give umbrage to his guest. Since they were equally fond of their hot toddy, their tobacco and their cards, you will understand that two brothers could not have gotten along more smoothly than the couple on those memorable nights a long time ago.

In the corner of the room ticked the tall, old-fashioned clock, marking the hours which slipped past unnoticed by either. Still George came and went like a shadow, and the fragrant punch in the brown stone pitcher on the corner of the table, although the mugs were frequently filled, was not allowed to get near the bottom.

When either awoke to the fact that the pungent smoke from his pipe was biting his tongue,

he refilled the bowl, relit it from one of the tall candles on the table, sipped again from the steaming mug and resumed his playing.

Sometimes in recalling that night, I have wondered as to the name of the game that so interested the two men. I have asked of others, who were familiar with the incident, but no one



Rall's Headquarters, Trenton.

seemed to think the matter of any interest. One thing, however, is interesting,—Colonel Rall and Abraham Hunt were deeply absorbed in it and would have been impatient of interruption.

Both were capable of hard drinking. What they had already swallowed would have sent almost any other man to the floor, but neither

showed any effect from his indulgence. When the pipe of one was extinguished, and he deliberately refilled and relighted it, there was no tremor or unsteadiness of the hand, and every reference to the game under way was intelligent. Not a point was lost nor did either make any misplay.

Now and then, the rattling sleet and the furious gale made itself heard even in that retired nook. Some of the drops pattered down the chimney and spat in the embers; the hail sounded like bird shot against the windows exposed to its violence, and at times it moaned as if a strong man were in distress. Through the tempest sounded the shouts and occasional bursts of song from the revellers on the streets or making merry in some of the near-by resorts. Military discipline was greatly relaxed, and the sounds of revelry and roystering, even when they reached the ears of the Hessian commander, did not disturb him. His officers would look after the soldiers, so far as it might be necessary,

and, even if they should be neglectful of their duty, what did it matter? The shivering Continentals were in Pennsylvania, with the impassable Delaware, choked with ice, rolling between. The most that they could do was to huddle together to keep themselves from freezing to death.

There was little difference in the skill of host and guest. The merchant kept score with the stub of a pencil on a piece of paper, and sometimes he was ahead and then fell behind. Both were deeply interested, and the colonel showed considerable glee when he led his opponent by several points.

Thus matters were going, when both were startled by the ringing sound of the knocker on the outer door. Rall looked up impatiently and uttered an oath in German.

"I vill see no ones!" he said: "vy does he comes here?"

"Give the matter no thought, Colonel," replied Hunt; "my servant will attend to the caller; it is your play."

It was Aaron Wagstaff, who, having successfully eluded Jack Marlton, had gone to the headquarters of Colonel Rall. The alert colored man was prompt in responding.

"I must see Colonel Rall," said the Tory, placing one foot on the upper step, as if sure no objection would be offered.

"Sorry, sah, but it am onpossible; he gibs strict awdors dat nobody warn't to see him to-night under no sarcumstances howsumeber."

"But this is of the utmost importance ;" persisted Aaron.

"Dat mought be, but nuffin can't be so 'mportant as dat de cunnel mustn't be 'starbed while he am drinkin' kyards and playin' his toddy. Ef I sh'd 'starb him, he'd bust my head inter a tousand pieces. You doan' want *dat*, do you?"

"I shouldn't feel very bad," growled Wagstaff, who was fast losing his temper, "for such a fool as you ain't of any use."

"I'se a mighty big use to myself; I sh'll hev

to do myself the honah ob wishin' you good night, sah."

The Tory became desperate.

"I say if you let me see the colonel, he will thank you all his life."

"Dat may be, but he'll bust my head fust; den what good will his tanks do."

"Well, if I can't see him, you must give him this letter," said Wagstaff; "it *must* reach him at once."

The earnestness of the Tory impressed the African. Stolid as he was, he dimly felt that there might be something back of all this which should be known to the Hessian commander, despite the strict orders he had given against being disturbed.

"I 'pose I kin hand him de letter," he said, accepting the note, "like 'nough he'll jam his sword frough me, but I'll took de chances."

"You mustn't forget," added the Tory impressively; "get it to him right away; you don't know how much depends on it."

Aaron Wagstaff had delivered the important message written by his father, warning Colonel Rall that General Washington, at the head of a formidable body of troops, was at that moment nearing Trenton with the intention of attacking him. The youth heaved a deep sigh of relief, like one who feels that a momentous duty has been performed. Upon his arrival in town, he was so chilled that he went in to the old Trenton tavern, and, amid the carousing soldiers and citizens, dried his clothing and warmed himself inside as well as out. He had to make inquiries to learn where to find Colonel Rall, so that it was quite late when he presented himself at the door of Abraham Hunt. The Tory had already taken several drinks, and he now wandered off, caring little where he went, since his responsibility was ended. He intended, however, to remain in Trenton to witness the overthrow of General Washington and his ragamuffins. Shortly after, as has already been related, he ran into the hands of Jack Marlton and received pretty rough usage.



George, the negro servant, unfolded the oil-skin in which the note was wrapped, and holding it in his hand, entered the room where the two men were absorbed with their cards and toddy. Both looked up angrily.

“What is it, George?” asked his master.

“Countryman said he mus’ see Kunnel Rall.”

“Well, what did you tell him?”

“Nuffin, but I smote him in de ’lebenth rib and he fotched up agin de house on de oder side ob de street, wid his head stove in. Jes’ as he was fallin’ he dropped dis lub letter which may be for one ob de gemmen.”

Saluting and humbly bowing, the African stepped across the floor and handed the note to his master, as if uncertain for which gentleman it was intended. If George had not just uttered such a tremendous whopper, he might have repeated the words of the messenger as to the importance of the message, but he was estopped from that now.

Mr. Hunt glanced at the superscription and passed it to his guest.

“It is for you, Colonel.”

5. The Hessian was angry, for he was studying an important play of cards when thus interrupted. He held the pasteboards stationary in his left hand, impatiently took the folded paper, and without glancing at the address, crumpled it up and shoved it into the side-pocket of his coat.

“I vil read him ven dis game ish done,” he said ; “’tis your blay, Meester Hunt.”

Immediately both concentrated their thoughts upon the contest. It was a hard struggle, and each took a couple of draughts of toddy before it was concluded.

The merchant won by so slight a margin that the colonel was eager to repeat the contest, and the smiling Hunt was agreeable. Neither thought of the letter that had been thrust into the officer’s pocket, and had he done so, it is not likely that it would have been read.

Still the old clock ticked, the sleet rattled, the gale moaned and the occasional shouts of the revelers were heard. The hour hand crept further and further around the face of the clock, until the long wintry night drew to an end ; but neither paid the slightest heed. They continued to deal and play, to smoke and drink, until even such veterans as they felt the effects of the indulgence, though not to an extent as to interfere with their skill at cards.

Even George, the servant, succumbed at last. He quietly assumed a comfortable position in a big chair in the adjoining room within easy call and, curling up, went to sleep. To himself he expressed his thoughts without restraint, and he became unconscious.

“Dem blasted fools am gwine to play right straight ahead for a week ; each one hab swallered fourteen quarts ob punch ; dey must be holler from de top of dar heads to dar big toes, and dey’s drinkin’ yit ; dey am so drunk dat dey won’t miss me fur a few days and I’ll snoze awhile.”

The night wore on. Colonel Rall was slightly ahead and was shuffling the cards and in the act of uttering a jest to his host, who had just set down his mug, when he stopped as abruptly as if the tremor of an earthquake was felt.

The old soldier instantly recognized the fearful sounds, that rang through the night, the rattle of musketry. It was volley firing, repeated again and again, quickly followed by the booming of cannon! It came from the upper part of the town and there could be no mistaking its meaning.

“Mein Gott!” he exclaimed, flinging down the cards and leaping to his feet, perfectly sobered by the startling occurrence; “we’re attacked!”



"MEIN GOTT!" HE EXCLAIMED, FLINGING DOWN THE CARDS AND LEAPING TO HIS FEET, "WE'RE ATTACKED."—Page 252.

*The Boy Patriot.*



## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE TURNING POINT OF THE REVOLUTION.

THE fierce storm that had raged during the night abated toward morning, and the faint streakings of daylight showed in the east, as General Greene's division of Continentals debouched from the Scotch Road, about a mile above Trenton, on the Pennington Pike, and hurried toward the town.

The advance guard was led by Captain William Washington, cousin of the commander-in-chief, and they had gone but a short distance when they came upon the Hessian outposts. In the dim light, the latter caught sight of the Americans, fired, and the next moment the patriots were upon them. A Hessian lieutenant was mortally wounded, and dropped in the road and



lay dying as the Continentals ran by him in hot pursuit of his companions, who were fleeing toward the town. Among the pursuers was Lieutenant James Monroe, then only nineteen years old, who afterward became President of the United States.

The pickets fled in at the top of their speed, the patriots at their heels, and the troops in the rear hurrying after them, with Washington close to the front. At the head of the town, where Warren and Greene Streets unite, six pieces of cannon were hastily unlimbered and, under the direction of Washington himself, pointed down Greene Street, where the Hessians were forming.

It was at this juncture that Washington heard the sound of musketry from the lower end of the town, in the direction of the river. It was a welcome signal indeed, for it told that General Sullivan had arrived almost on the appointed minute and was attacking at that point. Thus the Hessians were caught between two fires and



the patriots pressed them with the utmost vigor.

In a few minutes, the cannon of the Americans flashed out in the early morning light, and, as the startling boom rang over the sleeping town, the shot crashed among the enemy with destructive effect. The terrified inhabitants dashed out of their houses and, then finding the musket balls flying about their heads, they scurried back to their homes and timidly peeped out upon the battle.

A Miss Potts while running through the street felt a jar in the coil of hair at the back of her head, and, putting up her hand, found that a bullet had lodged there. Whereupon she stayed at home until the firing was over.

A little way down the street a party of Hessians wheeled three cannon into position and made ready to open on the Americans. They were certain to do great harm unless checked.

“ Follow me ! ” shouted Lieutenant Monroe (afterward President of the United States and then only nineteen years old), starting down the street on a run, swinging his sword above his head, and not looking around to see whether any one accompanied him. But several, as daring as their leader, were close behind. There was a brief struggle over the pieces, Lieutenant Monroe receiving a slight wound, but the cannon were quickly captured and turned on the fleeing enemy.

Colonel Rall was a brave man, and, knowing on the instant what the sounds meant, he caught up his hat and cloak, dashed out of the house of Abraham Hunt, and flourishing his sword, and shouting his commands in a clear, ringing voice did his utmost to stay the panic and bring order out of the chaos.

It was an impossible task, for no troops could have been caught at greater disadvantage. His officers did all they could to rally the men, and most of the soldiers displayed commendable

bravery ; but they knew they were attacked in front and rear ; the Continentals were pounding them not only with their own artillery but with the pieces they had captured. Moreover, the Americans displayed the finest discipline, firing in regular platoons and advancing steadily against them. It was out of their power to make an effectual stand and they fell back, breaking into a panic, and occasionally rallying under the appeals of their officers, and inspired by the example of Colonel Rall, who plunged into the thickest of the fight and recklessly exposed himself to the greatest danger.

Suddenly the shouting of the Hessian commander ceased, and he sank to the ground. He was at that moment near an apple orchard which stood at the eastern end of State Street, and the officers who ran forward to his help saw that he was badly wounded. He insisted upon being raised to his feet, and he was gently lifted, though his white face and contracted brows showed he was suffering great pain.

All this time, the cannon were thundering and the musketry rattling, with fierce charging back and forth and fighting going on in every direction. A large force of Hessians started to flee in the direction of Princeton, but found themselves confronted by Hand's riflemen, who were about to open fire, when the fugitives threw down their arms and surrendered.

Meanwhile, Sullivan was pressing matters from the riverside. More than a hundred troops and yagers dashed over the Assunpink bridge and slipped away in the direction of Bordentown. Before the remainder could follow them, they were hemmed in on all sides and they, too, surrendered.

Colonel Rall saw that it was all up. With a sergeant on either side, and leaning heavily upon each, he painfully made his way to where Washington was seated on his horse and handed his sword to him.

"I beg your excellency to see that my men are kindly treated," he said, turning his pale

face upward to the benignant countenance of Washington.

“ I assure you, sir, they shall receive honorable treatment,” was the reply ; “ I am very sorry to see you in this condition.”

“ It is the fate of war ; I have no complaint to make.”

Even in his extremity, he did not forget his courtesy. Resting for one moment on his left arm, he raised the right and saluted Washington, who returned the salutation and looked sympathetically down upon him. By that time, the colonel was unable to walk, and was fully supported by the sergeants until a litter was brought, upon which he was placed and tenderly carried to his headquarters, which were in a building standing on the present site of St. Mary's Catholic Church on Warren Street, There he was laid upon a bed and a surgeon summoned.

Lying thus, he recalled the note that had been brought to him some hours before, when play-

ing cards with Abraham Hunt. He asked one of his attendants to take it from the pocket of his coat and hand it to him. Slowly and painfully he unfolded the paper and read the penciled words. Then he refolded and passed it to the attendant.

“Ah,” said he mournfully, “if I had read that this could not have happened.”

When the surgeon arrived shortly afterward, he made an examination of the wound in the breast of the officer and told him it was mortal. “’Tis well,” he replied; “I shall die the death of a soldier, though it is one who forgot his duty.”

Some hours later, Colonel Rall was informed that General Washington had called to offer his sympathy and was waiting outside the door. The face of the stricken man lighted up and he ordered that the visitor be admitted. The next moment, the door was gently opened, and the tall, commanding figure of Washington, clad in full uniform and with his hat in his hand, came forward, his face expressive of tender sympathy

and sorrow. Walking slowly across the floor, and stepping as lightly as he could, he paused at the bedside, not heeding the chair the attendant had placed for him.

Colonel Rall, his wan face illumined by a faint smile, looked up and feebly extended his hand.

"I thank you for this," he said in broken English ; "it is kind of you."

"I cannot tell you how deeply I feel for you," said Washington in a tremulous voice ; "would that you had been spared."

"That could not be and I am glad that your Excellency is unharmed."

"Providence was kinder to me than to you ; if there is anything I can do to add to your comfort, I pray you will command me."

"Nothing could surpass your kindness ; if I think of anything, be assured I shall call upon you, but I know of nothing."

Washington saw he would only add to the suffering of the Hessian by staying longer. He again took his hand in his own, and the eyes of

the American filled with tears as he warmly pressed the feverish palm.

“Good-by, my dear sir.”

“Good-by,” replied Colonel Rall, whose voice choked, as he returned the warm pressure and looked up into the face of the great man, who took his departure without another word.

A few hours later, Colonel Rall breathed his last. His remains were deposited in the burying-ground of the First Presbyterian Church, on State Street, where they remained for more than half a century, when they and those of several other officers slain in the battle were removed to another part of the same grounds.

Since the battle of Trenton is justly regarded as the turning-point of the Revolution, it seems strange when we come to examine the statistics and find that, on the side of the Americans, only four were wounded and two killed, and the deaths of the latter being regarded by many as due to the extreme cold, rather than to the bullets of the enemy.



Of the Hessians about twenty were killed and four times as many wounded. In addition, there were nine hundred and fifty prisoners, six guns and a large number of small arms captured. The situation of Washington was critical, for Cornwallis, with a much superior force, was at Princeton, only ten miles distant, so near indeed that he must have heard the sounds of the firing and would soon arrive in the town. It would not do to remain, and gathering his prisoners and material, Washington, later in the day, crossed the Delaware again into Pennsylvania, where he could feel safe for the time, for all the boats on the river, for a long distance up and down stream, were on his bank. Count Donop at Burlington soon received news of the reverse and abandoned South Jersey. Cornwallis sent a number of horsemen toward Trenton to reconnoiter, but, discovering nothing of the Americans, they returned to Cornwallis, who still occupied Princeton.

## CHAPTER XX.

## ON THE FIRING LINE.

THE same startling sounds that sent Colonel Rall flying out of the house of Abraham Hunt in the misty light of December 26, 1776, roused Jack Marlton from his slumber in the rear room of the home where he had found refuge from the cold and storm.

He sprang from the blanket upon which he had been sleeping as he recalled his situation. He did not wait for the coming of Mary, who had befriended him, nor for any member of the family. He hastily unbarred the door, hurried out into the yard, and around to the front, which, it will be remembered, faced the river.

He noticed the almost complete cessation of the storm, though it was still bitterly cold. His clothing was dry and he was in a state of excite-

ment such as he had never known before. The battle of Trenton was on, and he wondered, with a rapidly beating heart, how it was going to terminate.

Ah, what would he not have given for his rifle that he might take part in the struggle? How he longed to strike a blow for his country!

He did not dream for a moment that the message of Aaron Wagstaff had failed. He was morally certain it had reached Colonel Rall, and equally certain that the Hessians had taken every precaution against surprise. Such being the case, the patriots had need of every arm to help in their defense.

Jack had reached the river road when he suddenly leaped several feet in air, with a gasp of terror. It seemed as if a volcano exploded beneath his feet and lifted him from the ground. He looked behind him. The street was full of soldiers, a platoon of which had just fired a volley over his head. Seeing his perilous situation, he dashed to the side of the street and close

against the nearest house, from which the terrified inmates were peeping forth.

He saw a number of the soldiers grinning at him, for they understood the panic into which he had been thrown. An officer waved his sword and motioned for him to keep out of the way.

"No need of telling me that," muttered the youth; "I'd never got in your way if I had known you were right behind me. Thank the Lord!"

This exclamation was caused by his recognition of the tattered uniforms of the soldiers. They were Continentals, being in fact the troops of General Sullivan, who, as you will recall, had reached Trenton over the river road, and were pushing vigorously through First Street, while the distant rattle of musketry, quickly accompanied by the booming of cannon showed that Washington was pressing things with equal vigor from the Pennington pike.

Jack had his eyes on the patriots who were

advancing fast, and almost abreast of him, still firing when scattering replies came from further down the street. Glancing thither, he descried twenty or more Hessians firing at the Americans and reloading as they ran before them.

The sight so thrilled Jack that, forgetful of the danger, he dashed out from the house where he had been shrinking, and with a shout started at full speed after the fleeing enemy, forgetful that he had no weapon, and that the worst misfortune that could come to him was to overtake the Hessians.

It was not far to where First Street crossed Queen, which I need not remind you was one of the main streets of Trenton, leading north to the head of the town, where Washington was driving the Hessians before him. Upon reaching the junction, the enemy in front of Sullivan's men, instead of continuing on to King Street (running parallel to Queen), turned and fled up Queen. There were more than a score, without any formation, but loading and firing at will.

At the moment of turning the corner, the Americans let fly with a volley, and Jack saw two of the Hessians drop to the ground, where they lay so motionless that it was certain both were killed. Previous to this, two others had been struck, but they limped out of sight into the houses along the street.

It will be noted that Jack was between the two fires, and in some danger from both, but being at the side of instead of the middle of the street, the peril was mainly from ill-directed shots. That this, however, was real he learned by the nipping of his coat-sleeve, and the whistling of a bullet which grazed his elbow, without inflicting any injury.

But he was in the flush of battle, and carried away by the delirious excitement of the occasion. The sight of the two Hessians lying at full length at the junction of the streets suggested to him a method by which he could secure the weapon he longed to grasp. Leaping from the unpaved sidewalk, he ran at full speed,

keeping just in front of the soldiers, who were advancing on the double quick. A lieutenant angrily shouted to him to get out of the way, but heedless of the command, the disobedience of which threatened serious consequences, Jack did not pause until he reached the nearest body. In falling, the soldier had allowed his musket to slip from his grasp and it lay several feet from him.

Jack picked it up and noticed that it was unloaded, the man having discharged it almost in the same instant he was hit. The powder-horn and bullet-pouch were still suspended around his neck, and spurred by the preciousness of the seconds, the young patriot placed his hand under the head of the poor fellow, raised it slightly and slipped the cords over from the neck, not forgetting the pouch, which contained the bits of linen used to wrap about the bullets. Jack was so hurried and absorbed in his work that he did not look into the face of the Hessian, until he had secured the articles about his own

neck. Then, as he glanced at the expressionless countenance, a great shock came to him.

The dead Hessian was "Jim," the enemy who had acted as guard over him when he was first placed in the prison-house, who would have shot him but for the timely arrival of Fritz, and who left the side of his sweetheart to commit the dreadful crime.

There was no feeling of exultation in the heart of Jack Marlton at what he saw. Rather he was awed, and felt a throb of pity for the fellow who had thus been cut down, while in the performance of what he conceived to be his duty.

But there was no time for gloomy meditation, for everything was going with a rush. He devoted a minute or two to reloading the weapon that only a few minutes before was in the grasp of his deadliest enemy, and by the time it was finished, the head of Sullivan's force was well up the hill, leading from First to Second Street. Jack started on a run after



them, for he wished above all things to join the "firing line."

At Second Street there was some confusion. The discovery was made that a body of Hessians were running down King Street toward the Assunpink bridge, with a view of reaching the White Horse road and escaping by way of Bordentown. Sullivan, who was cheering his men and shouting louder than any of his officers, discovered it and detached a considerable body, who set out on the double quick to head off the fugitives before they could reach the bridge. The attempt was only partly successful, more than a hundred, as already stated, outspeeding their pursuers and getting safely out of town.

By this time, the battle was at its height, the most effective part being performed by Greene's division, under the immediate eye of Washington. Uncertain what to do, Jack Marlton did the best, if not the only, thing possible. He ran out from the side of the street and took his place in the ranks of the Continentals, who

continued to load and fire, while rapidly advancing. Many of their shots were wild, and often the youth was unable to see what the men were firing at ; but, judging from their cheering he believed they must be doing effective work.

No attention was paid to the lad when he took his place at the end of one of the platoons, for every man was absorbed in his duty, but, before Jack suspected, his platoon was projected to the front, by the dissolving and breaking apart of the one in advance, as the halves returned to the rear.

The commands were so simple that Jack had no trouble in understanding them as well as the veterans at his side.

*“ Ready—aim—fire ! ”*

And the musket of the youth flamed out with the others, though he had not the slightest idea where his bullet went. But he cheered as they did, and hoped he had mowed down half a dozen of the enemy. In a twinkling, he had run to the rear of his company, and, while keep-

ing his position in the line, he devoted his skill to reloading his musket.

This respite gave the men a chance to speak to one another and notice things around them. For the first time, the big fellow on Jack's right seemed to see him.

"You made a good shot, younker, that time," he said with a grin.

"Do you think so?" asked the delighted lad ;  
"I aimed the best I could."

"What did you aim at?"

"Well, nothing in particular."

"Well, sonny, that's what you hit ; I don't think your bullet came within a third of a mile of striking anybody."

"Why what was the matter? I aimed like the rest of you."

"Not exactly, for you p'inted your gun at the sky ; greenhorns like you always shoot too high ; you must aim at the *feet* of the Hessians."

"I don't want to wound them in their feet."

"Well, you won't ; if you hit 'em at all,

which ain't likely, you'll do so in the head. Mind what I tell you, for it will soon be our turn again."

Sooner than he anticipated, but not soon enough to satisfy the impatient Jack, his platoon bulged out on the front, and fired with the same precision and close obedience to commands as before. Remembering the caution of his big friend, the boy aimed low at a group of the enemy, who had made a temporary halt hardly a hundred yards distant, and were standing in a hot fire at the Americans.

His friend did not forget him in the excitement of the moment. He was able to take note of his conduct and as they came together again at the rear, he took the occasion to compliment him. •

"You did well that time; you'll make a good soldier when you've gained a little more steadiness."

"That's what I want to be."

"You're made of the right stuff. Load up again and keep cool."

Jack laughed at himself, for he had forgotten all about ramming another bullet down the barrel of his musket and pouring the powder into the pan. He made haste to do his duty.

By this time, it was fairly light. The whole town had learned very quickly of the fight that was going on in the streets. There had been a hurried running to and fro. Many who were eager to get out-of-doors, were ten times more eager to get back again, and made a ludicrous scramble to do so, for the bullets were flying in all directions and the wonder is that more were not hit. The twigs were snipped off the naked trees, and most of the branches being coated with ice, the fragments flew in showers. The splintering of window-panes warned the inmates peeping out of their danger, and a scream now and then from a woman or child made it seem that some of them had been hit, but happily such was not the case.

Sullivan's troops kept their formation well, but they had gone only a short distance along

Second Street, when the lieutenant suddenly gave orders to his men to cease firing. It was just at the moment that Jack Marlton's platoon came to the front, and he and the rest were listening for the order to make ready.

"What's the meaning of that?" asked the wondering lad.

Instead of replying, his new friend, who, like his companions, was gazing intently down the street, suddenly threw his hat in air, broke into frenzied cheering, and fairly danced with joy. Following the direction of his gaze, Jack saw a large body of Hessians in the street, and noticed that they too had stopped firing. Beyond them could be distinguished the gleam of bayonets, though the youth was not tall enough to see clearly. He noticed, however, that wild cheering came from the locality of those shining bayonets, though the Hessians between them and Sullivan's command remained mute.

Suddenly the big soldier seemed to become aware of Jack's presence at his side. Ceasing

his own boisterous outburst, he turned and demanded :

“Yunker, why don’t you yell?”

“What for?”

“What for! Why don’t you see the whole gang have surrendered?”

“Is that so? Then I *will* yell.”

And Jack let out a whoop that rose above the hoarse shouts around him. He started to swing his hat, but his big friend saved him the trouble by snatching it from his head and flinging it forty feet up in air. The laughing Jack ran forward and caught it as it came down, and then swung and cheered to his heart’s content.

As a soldier, the lad ought to have kept his place in the ranks, like those with whom he had been associated for a brief while, but his exuberant feelings would not permit. Not being regularly enrolled, no notice was taken of him, when he slipped to the sidewalk, which was beginning to be crowded with spectators, quick to

discover that all danger was over and the Hessians prisoners.

Jack worked his way forward through the fast increasing swarm, and had not gone far when he caught sight of the majestic figure of Washington on his white horse, with his staff around him. Then he noticed the slowly moving form of the Hessian commander, supported on either side by a sergeant, painfully making his way to where the American commander was waiting to receive his sword. Jack had never seen the smooth, white-faced Colonel Rall before, but he knew him on the instant, and before his name was repeated by a score of sympathizing spectators.

There was a profound hush while the touching ceremony was under way, the cheering being suppressed out of respect for the wounded officer. The sight of him being carried past on a litter, with others here and there similarly cared for, while there was more than one bloody figure with crimsoned face limping about, gave



all a vivid picture of the horrors of war, though, in killed and wounded, the battle of Trenton can bear no comparison with scores and hundreds of conflicts that have since taken place on our soil.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## AFTER THE BATTLE.

NEVERTHELESS, the battle of Trenton marked the "joyful turning of the tide." It was the one thing needed to revive the drooping spirits of the country, and nothing could have occurred to do it more effectually. To quote the words I have used elsewhere it replaced despair with hope, and though hardship, sorrow and reverses were yet in store, the hand on the dial was never again turned backward.

It will be seen that the situation of Washington was dangerous in the extreme, for Cornwallis was within striking distance, with his overwhelming force of well-disciplined troops, and was sure to set out for Trenton, as soon as he learned of the reverse. Let me at this point anticipate

events to a brief extent. On the same afternoon, as has been stated, Washington recrossed the Delaware into Pennsylvania with his prisoners and captured material. Waiting three days on the western shore, he once more returned to Trenton. About the same time, Cadwalader brought one thousand eight hundred Pennsylvania militia over the river from Bristol, and the same number under General Mifflin joined Washington at Trenton. The army itself was so inspired by the brilliant success that one thousand four hundred of the New England troops, whose terms of enlistment were about to expire, gladly agreed to remain six weeks longer. Thus the Continental army was increased to six thousand effective men.

Robert Morris, the patriotic Philadelphian who did so much for the cause of American independence, knew how badly the soldiers were in need of money, their pay being many months behindhand and set to work with so much vigor that in a brief while he collected \$50,000 in

specie, all of which was sent to the commander-in-chief, and by him apportioned among the men who were delighted and made content.

Returning to the incidents immediately following the victory of Trenton, you will remember that Jack Marlton, after having served bravely for a brief while in the ranks, fell out again, when he discovered there was no further need of his services. It seemed as if in the course of half an hour the whole town were on the streets. Now that the firing had ceased, men, women, and children were everywhere, and it required energetic measures on the part of the American troops to keep them from interfering with their movements. Trenton, like all other places from New England to the South, was pestered by Tories and many of them had been on the best of terms with the Hessians during their occupancy of the town. They took good care, however, now that the situation was so changed to make it appear that they had been only shamming and were at heart as sound pa-

tricts as their neighbors, who never feared to avow their sentiments.

Jack Marlton drifted with a crowd that swarmed toward the prisoners, numbering almost a thousand, who were grouped together on First Street, unarmed and under a strong guard. While glancing from one stolid face to another, he was startled by the act of one of the Hessians who raised his hand in a military salute, while his broad face widened into a grin. A second glance showed that his salutation was meant for Jack himself, who, with a peculiar thrill, recognized his old friend Fritz.

In the hurly-burly our hero had forgotten all about him until this moment, when he saw him in the ranks among his fellow-unfortunates. Fritz, however, did not seem to be cast down by his situation, and still grinned and repeated the salute. Jack returned it, smiled and started to move toward him, when one of the guards sternly ordered him back. The youth was about to protest, but reflected that it would be useless

and he returned to the sidewalk. Above the noise and excitement, he shouted :

“I won’t forget you, Fritz.”

And then he made a painful discovery. Fritz’s left arm was hanging at his side and the coat-sleeve was crimsoned from the shoulder to the wrist, and the hand covered with blood. The fellow was wounded.

Distressed and troubled, Jack Marlton withdrew from the crowd, passed on to Queen Street, debating with himself what he could do to befriend Fritz, who had shown him so much kindness. He was walking slowly and had passed the old home of Abraham Hunt, when the sound of a galloping horse caused him to look up.

The horseman had come from behind him, and as Jack turned his head, he reined up at his side with the cheery salutation :

“How do you do, my young friend ?”

To the youth’s amazement he recognized the speaker as General Washington, who, identify-

ing him from the rear, approached and called to him. Jack was so overcome that he stared without speaking, and forgot even to salute the great man.

“I am glad to see that you are unharmed,” added Washington; “my headquarters are just across the street; I am very busy, but I should like to have a little talk with you; will you oblige me by following?”

“Yes, sir.”

Washington pricked the flank of his steed with his spur, and, cantering diagonally to the other side, dismounted, turning over his horse to an orderly, while he hurriedly entered the little stone dwelling, which remained standing for many years afterward, and was known by the name of “Washington’s headquarters.”

The great man was returning from his call upon the dying Colonel Rall at the old building on Queen Street. The brief respite given to Jack allowed him to pull himself together, so that when he appeared before the guard in

front of the building, and said he came at the request of the commander and was admitted, he was self-possessed and fully himself.

He was ushered into the small, low-ceilinged room at the front of the house, where everything seemed to be in inextricable confusion. Several officers were seated about the apartment, the little stand in the middle was littered with papers, men were continually coming and going, some dashing in and out, and Generals St. Clair, Greene, and Sullivan exchanged a few words with Washington, sent out orders, and then hurried away themselves, Greene returning in a few minutes, while the bustle and confusion seemed never to diminish for a moment.

As Jack, somewhat abashed, entered this place, Washington took two or three of his giant strides toward him and grasped his hand. His manner was dignified but cordial, and, still holding the hand of the youth in his own, he led him to the further side of the room, where neither sat down, but stood and talked in tones



that others might have heard but to which they paid no attention.

"Jack," said Washington, with a significant smile, "I had to get on the best I could last night without your help as guide."

"O General, I have been so anxious to see you and explain about that : what did you think of me ?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I didn't have time to think much of you. Still, I have some curiosity to learn how it was you came to fail me."

"Well, now I will tell you all about it."

And thereupon Jack gave his story in a straightforward, modest, manly way, from the moment his father made known his change of purpose and sent him to help guard the home of the Wagstaff Tories, the flight of Aaron, Jack's pursuit across the Delaware and his adventures in Trenton the night before. The youth passed lightly over his daring pursuit of the traitor, but it is not to be supposed that his

august listener failed to appreciate its heroic features, nor did he tell of his attempt to take the letter addressed to Colonel Rall by force from Aaron Wagstaff, but he dwelt fully upon the invaluable friendship of his Hessian friend Fritz, while his possession of a musket compelled Jack to explain his brief service in the ranks.

Washington quietly remarked :

“That written warning of which you speak was delivered to Colonel Rall and you have been puzzled to understand why it failed of effect. The truth was he thrust it into his pocket and forgot about it until after the battle. He read it but a short while ago, in his room, where I called upon him, and I regret to say he can live but a short time longer.”

“I knew he had been wounded, but did not know he must die ; I am sorry.”

“So am I, but it is so ordered by Providence. I am so busy, Jack, that I can give you but a few minutes, but I want to say that the story

you have just told me proves you to be a true hero. It is not your fault that you failed, for no one could have tried harder than you. You took ten times the risk that would have been yours had you acted as one of my guides. The guard, who failed in their duty, deserve punishment, but the victory Heaven has vouchsafed to us, disposes me to be indulgent. You have proven yourself a patriot and friend to me."

"I want to tell you something, General," the delighted youth hastened to say; "father is going to let me enlist: what do you think of *that*?"

"I am pleased but not surprised; I was sure he would do so, after I left your home two nights ago. I need not say you will be welcome, and shall have every opportunity to serve you your country."

"That's all I wish, but I want to ask you a favor, General."

The boy's eagerness brought a smile to the face of the great man, who said:

"It will give me pleasure to do anything I can for you."

"It's about my friend Fritz ; the poor fellow is wounded."

"I am sorry to hear that, but every one of the unfortunate prisoners will be looked after, as if they were our own men. Have no misgiving on those grounds."

"I do not, but may I ask what will be done with Fritz after he gets well?"

"He will be exchanged, as soon as the opportunity presents itself. You do not imagine any harm would be done him? Comfortable quarters have been secured for all that need medical attention, and none of them will be neglected. They have surgeons of their own, who will be left in charge, since they do not need the help of ours."

"But I was thinking, General, whether you wouldn't be willing to parole Fritz and let him be taken over to our house, where mother will look after him."

"I don't know as that will improve matters ; it might be dangerous to expose him while the weather is so inclement, but I will have inquiry made. What is his full name ?"

"I declare ! I never heard it."

"Since his given name is Fritz and he is wounded in the arm, it will be easy to discover him. I will say that if his surgeon deems it prudent to let him be taken to your home and he wishes to go, I will give such permission ; I will have his parole taken, and all shall be as you wish so far as it is in my power to make it so."

Jack saw he was using valuable time of the commander-in-chief, for several leading officers were awaiting the chance to speak to him. The youth, therefore, thanked him, made an elaborate salute, and passed out upon the street, where he almost collided with Aaron Wagstaff, hurrying in the direction of the open country to the north.

"Helloa !" called Jack ; " matters seem to have gone wrong with your friends."

“With *my* friends !” repeated Wagstaff, in pretended astonishment ; “I think they have gone just right.”

“Do you call it going right, when Colonel Rall has been mortally wounded, and nearly all of his men captured ?”

“Oh, you mean the Hessians ; why *they* ain’t my friends.”

“When did they become your enemies ?”

“They always was ; I never liked them any better than you.”

“What about that letter you took to Colonel Rall last night ?”

“I never took any letter,” was the unblushing response ; “that was one of my jokes ; can’t you see the way things went that Colonel Rall never got any letter from me ?”

“He got it sure, but he put it in his pocket and forgot to read it until after Washington attacked ; I know that’s the fact.”

“It wasn’t *my* letter, for I didn’t have any for him,—that’s honest, Jack.”

The latter was on the point of asking whether the dash from his home and midnight flight across the Delaware was a joke, when he recollected that it was idle to argue with such a fellow. He therefore added :

“ I’m going home, Aaron, for a few days and will then enlist under Washington ; I have father’s promise ; why can’t you go with me ? ”

“ I’ll think about it, Jack, and talk with the old man ; if he’s willing I’m with you.”

Jack reflected that this was a very safe promise for the Tory to make, and with a few more unimportant words, the two separated. Jack crossed the river that afternoon with the troops of Washington to Pennsylvania, and soon after was at his home telling his story to his father and mother.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## CONCLUSION.

CAPTAIN MARLTON kept track, so far as was possible, of the movements of Washington and his army. You are familiar enough with the history of your country to know of his brilliant exploit, by which he outwitted Cornwallis, and, leaving Trenton by a circuitous route, fell upon the British force at Princeton, January 3, 1777, and before the baffled and chagrined commander could return, Washington was well on his way to Morristown, where he went into winter quarters.

Seeing that there was no prospect for active service for Jack, his father, although ready to keep his pledge, advised him to wait until the following spring before enlisting, and the son willingly did so.



One week after the battle of Trenton, and when the Delaware was comparatively free of ice, Jack borrowed a boat and sailed across to Trenton, where he made his way to the hospital in which he found his old friend Fritz Stahl, as he learned was his full name, still suffering from his wounded arm, but in good spirits. Washington, in the hurry of his public duties, did not forget his promise to Jack, and the Hessian, who had been paroled, had permission to accompany the lad to his home on the other side of the river, as soon as his medical attendant deemed it safe to do so. It was an unusual proceeding, but the surgeon made no objection and the happy fellow gladly went with his old friend.

On his way, he paused to see his sweetheart Mary, who was as delighted as he, since it was agreed that he should see her as often as it was prudent, and he was certain to receive the best of care in his new home.

No one could have been more welcome than Fritz, for the parents of Jack deeply appreciated

the kindness he had shown their son, when neither had any reason to look for anything of that nature. Fritz was strong, sturdy and more than willing to do everything in his power to make himself useful. His wound rapidly mended and in the course of a few weeks he was as well as ever. Some two months after his entrance into the household, a messenger reached the house with a notification that he had been exchanged and he was ordered to join the command of Baron Wilhelm Knyphausen, who came to this country as second in command of the Hessians in 1776, and in the following year was placed at the head of the German auxiliaries.

Fritz ran no little risk in disregarding this order, since it placed him in the position of a deserter, but he boldly took it, led thereto by several reasons. It must be remembered, in the first place, that the Hessians fought in the Revolution, as a mere matter of business. There was no sentiment either way, and, had they been

hired by Washington instead of King George III., they would have done as good service for the Americans as for their enemies. Therefore, Fritz had no qualms of conscience in the matter.

Furthermore, he felt such a strong liking for Jack Marlton that he could not bear the thought of fighting against him. The possibility of the two meeting in battle and one killing the other made him shudder with horror. And lastly, but by no means least, a certain blue-eyed maiden in Trenton acted like a magnet in keeping him where he could see her quite often.

It may not be a welcome thing to state, but it is a fact all the same, that there are to-day in the neighborhood of Trenton and in Bucks County across the river, a good many descendants of the Hessians, and they are among the best people. I remember some years ago, when an old house was torn down nearly opposite Trenton, there were found more than a dozen Hessian military hats in the garret. How they

came to remain there for so many years unnoticed no one knew, but the fact has its significance.

If you are disposed to make inquiries for Hessian descendants in the section I have named, let me suggest that you be guarded about it, for most of the descendants referred to feel sensitive over the matter and might not be disposed to furnish reliable information.

Fritz Stahl remained for three years with Captain Marlton, who paid him good wages, for he was the best man he ever had in his employ, and his intelligent labor added a good deal to the value of the fertile little farm. Strange as it may seem, Fritz occasionally, when he could be spared, helped on the larger farm of the Wagstaffs, who often found it difficult to procure the hands they needed. It need hardly be said that Aaron never enlisted. His excuse was that his father could not spare him, and he added with a grim smile that must have wrenched him, that Washington was doing so well he

really did not need his assistance. Although the sentiments of the family were well known, they were not molested or interfered with in any way, for the patriots were always more magnanimous than the Tories.

At the end of two years, Fritz and Mary were married and made their home in the comfortable tenant house built for them by Captain Marlton, who felt that the honest fellow had earned a good deal more than he received. The existence of Fritz seemed to have been forgotten by his former officers, for he was never disturbed, and he and his wife lived to a green old age, extending so far into the succeeding century, that both are well remembered by more than one of the old inhabitants of the vicinity.

Washington remained in his winter quarters at Morristown, until May, 1777. In the latter part of that month, with an army numbering less than 8,000, he started on his march southward. Howe was at Brunswick (the town was not called "New" Brunswick until after the

Revolution), with an army fully double in numbers. He marched to Staten Island, embarked his army on his brother's fleet, and soon after entered Chesapeake Bay. Washington, seeing that his destination was Philadelphia, moved to Germantown with a view of defeating his purpose. The battle of the Brandywine was fought September 11, 1777, and the Americans were defeated. It was in this battle that Lafayette was wounded and Jack Marlton first saw service as a regularly enlisted private in the ranks of the Continentals. He passed through without harm, but was greatly depressed by the failure of the patriots, followed soon after by the occupation of Philadelphia by the enemy. The next engagement in which our young hero took part was in October at Germantown, when the Americans were again unsuccessful, the lamentable feature of the battle being that they withdrew when on the very eve of gaining a brilliant victory.

Then came the dismal, dreadful winter at

Valley Forge, when the patriots braved starvation and death from freezing. Jack went through it with the rest of the heroes, one of the occupants of his miserable cabin being his old friend John Fitch, who never lost his patriotic faith in Washington and the success of American Independence.

The British withdrew from Philadelphia about the middle of June, 1778, and started overland to New York. At Monmouth Court-House, Washington overtook and defeated them. It was in that battle that Jack Marlton's coolness and intrepidity attracted such favorable notice that he was made a first lieutenant.

After that there were few chances for important service until the final campaign at Yorktown, where Jack was made a captain, while the siege of Cornwallis was in progress. Heaven was kind to him, and, when the surrender of the British army took place and the courier started on his headlong ride to Philadelphia with the glorious news, the young officer was without a

scratch, though he had had several narrow escapes. He was among those who shed tears when the time came to bid farewell to the beloved commander-in-chief.

It seemed to him that as the Father of his Country looked down on him, he held his hand longer than usual, and there was a tremor in his voice and a suspicious moisture in his eyes, as he said :

“ Good-by, Captain Marlton ; you have a true patriot for a father ; I beg you to give him and your mother my most respectful regards, and tell them from me that our country has had no truer or braver soldier in its employ than you ; you proved yourself its devoted servant and a *Friend of Washington*.”

THE END.



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"Harry Sandwith, the Westminster boy, may fairly be said to beat Mr. Henty's record. His adventures will delight boys by the audacity and peril they depict. . . . The story is one of Mr. Henty's best."—*Saturday Review*.

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"The story, from the critical moment of the killing of the sacred cat to the perilous exodus into Asia with which it closes, is very skillfully constructed and full of exciting adventures. It is admirably illustrated."—*Saturday Review*.

**With Washington at Monmouth: A Story of Three Philadelphia Boys.** By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Three Philadelphia boys, Seth Graydon "whose mother conducted a boarding-house which was patronized by the British officers;" Enoch Ball, "son of that Mrs. Ball whose dancing school was situated on Letitia Street," and little Jacob, son of "Chris, the Baker," serve as the principal characters. The story is laid during the winter when Lord Howe held possession of the city, and the lads aid the cause by assisting the American spies who make regular and frequent visits from Valley Forge. One reads here of home-life in the captive city when bread was scarce among the people of the lower classes, and a reckless prodigality shown by the British officers, who passed the winter in feasting and merry-making while the members of the patriot army but a few miles away were suffering from both cold and hunger. The story abounds with pictures of Colonial life skillfully drawn, and the glimpses of Washington's soldiers which are given show that the work has not been hastily done, or without considerable study.



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"The tale is well written and well illustrated, and there is much reality in the characters. If any father, clergyman, or schoolmaster is on the lookout for a good book to give as a present to a boy who is worth his salt, this is the book we would recommend."—*Standard*.

**Tom Temple's Career.** By HORATIO ALGER. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

Tom Temple, a bright, self-reliant lad, by the death of his father becomes a boarder at the home of Nathan Middleton, a penurious insurance agent. Though well paid for keeping the boy, Nathan and his wife endeavor to bring Master Tom in line with their parsimonious habits. The lad ingeniously evades their efforts and revolutionizes the household. As Tom is heir to \$40,000, he is regarded as a person of some importance until by an unfortunate combination of circumstances his fortune shrinks to a few hundreds. He leaves Plympton village to seek work in New York, whence he undertakes an important mission to California, around which center the most exciting incidents of his young career. Some of his adventures in the far west are so startling that the reader will scarcely close the book until the last page shall have been reached. The tale is written in Mr. Alger's most fascinating style, and is bound to please the very large class of boys who regard this popular author as a prime favorite.

**Maori and Settler: A Story of the New Zealand War.** By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by ALFRED PEARSE. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

The Renshaws emigrate to New Zealand during the period of the war with the natives. Wilfrid, a strong, self-reliant, courageous lad, is the mainstay of the household. He has for his friend Mr. Atherton, a botanist and naturalist of herculean strength and unflinching nerve and humor. In the adventures among the Maoris, there are many breathless moments in which the odds seem hopelessly against the party, but they succeed in establishing themselves happily in one of the pleasant New Zealand valleys.

"Brimful of adventure, of humorous and interesting conversation, and vivid pictures of colonial life."—*Schoolmaster*.

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**Wrecked on Spider Island; or, How Ned Rogers Found the Treasure.** By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price \$1.00.

A "down-east" plucky lad who ships as cabin boy, not from love of adventure, but because it is the only course remaining by which he can gain a livelihood. While in his bunk, seasick, Ned Rogers hears the captain and mate discussing their plans for the willful wreck of the brig in order to gain the insurance. Once it is known he is in possession of the secret the captain maroons him on Spider Island, explaining to the crew that the boy is afflicted with leprosy. While thus involuntarily playing the part of a Crusoe, Ned discovers a wreck submerged in the sand, and overhauling the timbers for the purpose of gathering material with which to build a hut finds a considerable amount of treasure. Raising the wreck; a voyage to Havana under sail; shipping there a crew and running for Savannah; the attempt of the crew to seize the little craft after learning of the treasure on board, and, as a matter of course, the successful ending of the journey, all serve to make as entertaining a story of sea-life as the most captious boy could desire.

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This tale smacks of the salt sea. It is just the kind of story that the majority of boys yearn for. From the moment that the Sea Queen dispenses with the service of the tug in lower New York bay till the breeze leaves her becalmed off the coast of Florida, one can almost hear the whistle of the wind through her rigging, the creak of her straining cordage as she heels to the leeward, and feel her rise to the snow-capped waves which her sharp bow cuts into twin streaks of foam. Off Marquesas Keys she floats in a dead calm. Ben Clark, the hero of the story, and Jake, the cook, spy a turtle asleep upon the glassy surface of the water. They determine to capture him, and take a boat for that purpose, and just as they succeed in catching him a thick fog cuts them off from the vessel, and then their troubles begin. They take refuge on board a drifting hulk, a storm arises and they are cast ashore upon a low sandy key. Their adventures from this point cannot fail to charm the reader. As a writer for young people Mr. Otis is a prime favorite. His style is captivating, and never for a moment does he allow the interest to flag. In "The Castaways" he is at his best.

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